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OR,

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# THE SEA CAPTAIN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SCHOONER'S FATE.

THE wind blew almost a hurricane from the east. All along the Massachusetts coast the lofty seas came rolling in with the crash of a hundred thunderbolts.

Near Cohasset the spray was whirled over the roofs of the houses, and the bell of the old school on the promontory, clanging incessantly, kept time with the violent rocking of the building.

Little children were frightened, and, not daring to venture outside their habitations, huddled together near their elders, or with white faces pressed to the panes, watched the screaming gulls flying low, and the scud and rack of the tempest careering over the sea like enormous genii with great black wings.

From the balcony of an old stone house—half tavern, half grocery store—with moss-covered roof and whitewashed walls, two men were gazing earnestly toward the dark vail of storm-mist, that completely screened the ocean a few miles from the harbor of Cohasset. One of the men, the owner of the house, and Simon Holdfast by name, was tall, rawboned and small-eyed, with a short nose and pinched nostrils. The other was short, stout and broad-shouldered; a gruff-looking sailor of middle age, wearing heavy boots that reached almost to his hips, and a cap of sealskin curiously rounded at the top.

"She bain't to be seen now," said the tall man, as he squinted through an antiquated spy-glass. "I hope you was mistaken, Brooks. It'll be tew theausand dollar eaout of my pocket if you wasn't."

Brooks shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"All you think of is your money," he said, gruffly. "I'm

thinking of my poor little nephew, who, as you know, is a cabin-boy aboard your schooner. It'll sartainly fare hard with him and all the rest of the crew if the craft is lost in such a blow as this."

" You hain't sure you saw her?"

" No; not sartain. The wind blew a hole in the murk yonder, about five minutes ago, and as I told you, I *thought* I saw something which looked like a schooner's shattered top-mast."

" I *dew* hope you was mistaken. Them new ratlines, and the new fly jib-boom, cost an awful sight o' money. It *would* be a loss—the loss o' that craft."

" Your loss would be nothing to mine!" cried Brooks. " My nephew would be drowned, and his mother—my widowed sister Ruth—would go crazy."

" Fiddle! What's that to my tew theausand dollars, which I've 'arned by savin' and scrapin' and by hard—"

" Cheating," put in Brooks, " or, more politer speaking, thieving, which means the same thing, and—"

He checked himself, took off his sealskin cap, and bowed low; for, strange as it may seem, this rough fellow, whose manners were, at times, as blunt as those of a sea-hog, and who was as reckless as a blind horse, prided himself on possessing a great deal of suavity and caution. Holdfast, who really had a large share of the latter quality, and who knew full well that Brooks was very quick-tempered, instead of replying to his companion's remark, again pointed his glass seaward, and continued squinting through it until the night shadows gathered.

The schooner, for which the two men were watching, a coasting vessel belonging to Simon Holdfast, had been expected ever since the morning of the previous day. She was commanded by Will Waud, a young man of twenty-three, a sort of Jack-at-all-trades, on whom a certain Rose Hope—the beauty of the village—was said to look with favorable eye. The youth was stately and handsome, with black hair as straight as an Indian's, and clear gray eyes. No man living could see a sail further off than he, or could work a craft better. He was expert in all manly exercises, and particularly so in such aquatic sports as swimming, diving, and rowing, which

were frequently indulged in by the young people of the village. With the true New England instinct, he was something of a reader too, spending a great part of his leisure time improving his mind. The rude fishermen were glad to have him write their letters, and to read aloud from a volume of Dibdin's spirited sea-songs in his possession. He was respected by most of his acquaintances, in fact was a general favorite, and this was why many an anxious eye was now turned seaward, looking for the schooner. Every body knew that if such a craft could be saved in a heavy gale, Will Waud was the man to save her; but this raging storm seemed as if it would defy all mortal power, and the young captain's friends hoped that he had been able to put into some port on the coast below, before its fury burst upon him.

Not one of those who watched the dark sea felt more anxiety than did Rose Hope, who, from the upper window of a two-story cottage, had been gazing toward the angry waters for many long hours. She well deserved her reputation as the village beauty. Her dark golden braids were tastefully arranged around one of the sweetest faces in the world; her figure was perfect, her motion as graceful as the undulating roll of a gentle sea. She was the adopted daughter of Mr. Hope, an old widower who, with the young girl and a dissipated son, who was seldom at home, occupied the cottage, which he rented of Simon Holdfast.

"There!" muttered Rose, as the twilight shadows gathered, "I believe the schooner has put into some safe port, after all!"

Still she sat by the window, restless and uneasy. The gale raged with unabated fury, and the house rocked to every fresh gust. The booming of the vast ocean seemed to grow louder, and the great sign in front of Holdfast's tavern fairly shrieked as it swung on its rusty hinges.

Suddenly Rose sprung up with a low cry. Far away, shooting up through the gloom, she beheld a tall column of flame. It grew larger and larger, and soon spread into great fiery billows, that plainly revealed the hull and only remaining mast of a schooner, with a red and white flag streaming from her truck!

"It is the schooner, the Narwhale!" gasped Rose. "Oh, Will!—poor Will! God help him!"

Meanwhile, half frantic—without bonnet or shawl—with her long hair streaming, a middle-aged woman, dressed in black, had emerged from a neighboring building, and rushed into the very midst of a group of men collected near the beach.

" Halloa, neaow, who's this come to bother us?" inquired Holdfast, who was one of the party

" It's my sister, you infernal miser!" roared Brooks, recognising her by the light of the lanterns carried by some of the men.

" Save him! save my boy!" screamed the widow, and hardly knowing what she did, she rushed towards the water.

Begging her to be cautious, Brooks gently pushed her back; then, while his companions crowded round the half-distracted woman, trying to soothe her, he shoved into the sea an old skiff which he had been dragging along, and springing into it seized the oars.

Slow headway he made against the gale and the rolling surge. The great seas tossed the skiff like a little chip, while clouds of foam and spray shrouded the occupant from view. When he had gone a few yards from the beach, both his oars broke, and the skiff, whirling round, rolled over, leaving him struggling in the sea. The frail vessel was dashed to pieces against a rock, and the venturesome mariner was with difficulty rescued by the men who had watched him.

One great mass of surging flame, the schooner was now scarcely a league distant. The black mist of the storm, rolling round her, looked like red sulphur clouds, raining fire, while the waves, catching the gleam on all sides, resembled upheaving streams of lava. The men on the beach could do nothing to help the crew. No sort of craft could make sufficient headway or could be kept afloat if pulled against such a sea and wind as were raging. In the broad glare of the rolling flames, however, a boat full of human beings was now distinguished, tossing and rolling occasionally on the crest of some towering wave. It was driven rapidly towards the coast, and the spectators seemed to think that, if its head could be kept to the sea, it might reach the shore.

Quivering in every limb, and white with suspense, Ruth crept upon the sand, heedless of the spray by which she

was drenched, keenly watching the lone boat, and endeavoring to make out among its occupants the form of her son.

"I can not see him," she wailed. "Can any of the rest of you see my child?"

"Not yet," replied her brother; "but, keep up a brave heart, sister; we'll have him safe among us, I trust, in good time."

"How do you know that schooner is the *Narwhale?*" inquired Mr. Hope, a mild, benevolent-looking old man, who, with Rose, now arrived upon the scene.

"I can tell my own craft, I reckon!" cried Simon Holdfast, "even if the white and red flag she carries hadn't been seen a-waving from her fore. Good cloth, neighbor, was in that flag; cost me thirty cents a yard; but it's all burnt to cinders by this time, as every plank in the craft will be in a few minutes! Two thousand dollars eaout of my pocket in jist one night."

At this moment a sort of groan burst from several of the spectators. It was caused by the sudden disappearance of the boat, when it had approached within about half a mile of the beach.

"Swamped!" exclaimed Holdfast. "There goes twenty dollars more; twenty dollars' worth of good cedar plank!"

Ruth wrung her hands. "Oh! can not a boat be launched? Will not some of you launch a boat, and snatch my Harry from those terrible waves?"

"Ay, ay, poor sister, we'll do all we can," exclaimed her brother. With the assistance of several of his companions, he contrived to push into the water a large six-oared boat belonging to several fishermen, and which had been hauled up out of reach of the surges, when the storm commenced. The men had little hope of saving any of the schooner's crew; still, they could not bear the thought of remaining idle while the poor fellows were struggling in the sea, less than half a mile from where they stood.

In the broad streams of light, luridly quivering along the raging waves, an uplifted hand was occasionally seen, while a sort of gurgling shout for help was borne at frequent intervals to the anxious watchers. To reach the unfortunate castaways, the stout boatmen strove in vain. They could

make no headway against the gale and the heavy seas which would hurl back the boat, with every stroke that was pulled. Drenched and exhausted, they finally stopped their useless exertions, and rejoined those who had been vainly watching for the appearance of some one of the *Narwhale's* crew, alive or dead. Ruth was sobbing and moaning as if bereft of her reason, while Rose, silent, pale and wild-eyed, stood with clasped hands, leaning forward, as if she would pierce with her anxious glance the heavy gloom that now shrouded the waves. The schooner, having by this time burnt nearly to the water's edge, the red light had retreated to the immediate vicinity of the yet flaming hull, so that no sign of the struggling seamen was longer visible. Suddenly, however, a dark object came rolling on the crest of a huge sea; there was a loud crash, and the spectators beheld the swamped boat flying into splinters, as it was dashed against a rock near the beach.

"That's his knell!" moaned Ruth. "Dead! dead! dead! Ah, if them cruel seas would only throw his little cold body into my arms, that, at least would be some comfort."

She pressed both hands to her heart, breathed a sort of half-choked gasp, and reeled, half fainting, into her brother's arms.

"She'll never get over it!" cried Brooks. "That's the way her mother went off!"

"Ay, ay, she's a-dying!" cried several, pressing round her.

She indeed looked as if she was dying. Her white face was growing rigid, and her eyes dim; her whole frame shook as if with a spasm, her head dropped heavily on her supporter's shoulder; her arm sunk powerless by her side, and every vestige of life seemed about to leave her, when—"Ahoy there, ahoy!" rung like a bugle blast through the storm, and a tall figure was seen staggering along the beach towards the group.

Instantly, as if electrified, the drooping Ruth revived. She sprung from her brother's arms.

"I know that voice well!" she cried. "And, oh!—perhaps! perhaps!"

She did not finish the sentence; but snatching a lantern from the nearest man, she bounded toward the reeling form.

Now the red lantern's glare flashed full upon a young sailor whose garments were drenched through and through and soiled with sand; whose face was bruised and bloody; and who, walking as if lamed and exhausted, carried with difficulty the half senseless form of a boy of eleven or twelve years of age.

"My child! my boy!" screamed Ruth, catching the youngster from his arms. "He is safe! he lives!"

"Ay, thank God he lives!" answered the young sailor, and fell powerless upon the sand.

"It is Captain Waud!" shouted Brooks, who with his companions now arrived. "God bless him! he has saved my little nephew!"

"Ah, he is badly hurt! poor Will! poor Will!" cried Rose, pressing forward and impulsively clasping the sufferer's hands, as the men helped him to his feet.

"Not much," he replied, "not much. The seas treated me roughly; but I'm glad they didn't wash little Harry out of my arms. This has been a sad night's work," he added, mournfully. "It wouldn't have been so bad, perhaps, if the cook had put out his galley fire, as I ordered. It was the upsetting of his stove that set the craft on fire. For God's sake, men, leave me and look along the beach to see if you can't find some more of my poor crew. There were seven of us in the boat when it was swamped."

"Ay, Captain Waud," cried Holdfast. "I warrant there won't be a timber of the schooner picked up. You've made a bad thing of it—a losing me my tew thousand dollars."

"You're a tight-fisted rascal, Simon," cried Brooks, with a low bow. "Your schooner with her rotten timbers, which you was too mean to repair, couldn't have been expected to weather such a gale, a-leaving the fire out of the question, which was the fault of the cook, not the captain's."

Holdfast ground his teeth, but said not a word in reply. He followed the men, who conducted Waud to his tavern, but did not seem to take any interest in the movements of those who were searching the beach, nor in the rescued boy who, rather weak, but able to walk, was being led toward his home between Rose and his mother.

A little brandy, which was so grudgingly offered by Holdfast

that Ward refused to take it until he had paid for it, re-vived and strengthened the young captain. He washed his bruised face, and having rested a few minutes, left the house to join in the search for the crew. Three men in whom life yet remained were found and taken care of. On the next day the dead bodies of the rest were discovered, washed ashore at different points.

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## CHAPTER II.

## THE CHECK.

WILL WARD, with his uncle Thomas—a sea-captain and an old bachelor—lodged in a boarding-house, kept by Ruth Butler, the woman whose boy he had saved.

It was a long time since Captain Thomas had performed a voyage. He was what in Massachusetts was termed a "shiftless fellow." He was fond of the bottle and was a gambler. Lately he had come into possession of a trading-brig, called the *Watchfire*. The vessel lay at his service, alongside one of the New Bedford docks, but the captain did not seem inclined to use her.

On the day after the burning of the schooner, he told his nephew that he had calculated to sell his vessel.

Will, who knew that the money would be squandered for drink and at cards, advised him not to do so.

"I will make a voyage in your brig," said he. "I will go for a cargo of cocoanut oil and spices, and will thus bring you in more money than if you sold the craft."

"But, I want the cash now. I must have cash. Since the burning of the schooner, Simon Holdfast is at me all the time to pay him the fifteen hundred dollars I borrowed of him not long ago, on security of the brig."

"Holdfast may consent to wait; perhaps you'd better speak to him about it."

"He won't consent," was the captain's reply, "but I'll try him."

He did so, and was surprised to see Simon's eyes snap with pleasure.

" You owe me a big sum, Captain, a big sum, but I'm ready for a compromise with ye ; don't like to be hard on ye, you know ! "

His visitor was still more surprised. Such a declaration from the tight-fisted, hard-hearted Holdfast, sounded strange enough !

The tavern-keeper, while he was the richest, was looked upon as the meanest man in the village. He would frequently plead poverty, when, besides nearly all the houses in this little cluster near the sea, he owned in Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, a large store kept by an agent who did a thriving business in furnishing whalers with tubs of new hempen line, good harpoons, lance poles, sails, &c., &c. His avarice knew no bounds : he would endeavor to obtain almost every thing he saw, at an unreasonably small price. Among other things, Holdfast coveted Rose Hope for a wife. He was only forty, and thought an excellent match might be made between him and the village beauty. He spoke to Mr. Hope about it ; but the old man referred him to the young girl herself, who soon gave him to understand that she could never love him, and that she would not marry a man she could not love, were he a thousand times richer than Simon Holdfast. This reply, delivered in a kind but firm voice, made the man very angry, although he was too cautious to show his real feelings. He determined to wait, thinking that the time might come when extreme poverty would cause Rose to change her mind and accept him. He knew that the little money Hope possessed was rapidly dwindling away : that the girl already was in the habit of contributing from her small wages towards paying the rent of the cottage. The old man had been rich—was a wealthy oil-merchant—until his partner, who absconded with a large amount, left him with only a few thousands, which would just carry him comfortably along the stream of life, in his old age, but for the dissipated habits of his son George, who seldom earned money in any other way than by gambling, and who would often obtain cash from his indulgent parent only to squander it. It was a consciousness of her benefactor's poverty that had determined Rose to accept

the situation of teacher: she could not bear the idea of being a burden on her old friend.

While his son drank rich liquors and dined expensively in some Boston hotel with his father's money, quadrupled perhaps by gambling, Mr. Hope would content himself with bread, milk, and the simplest viands that Sarah, his servant, prepared for him. Very often, however, since obtaining her situation, Rose would contrive to buy for him some little luxury out of her school wages; something which he would relish and yet make no inquiries about; for, of late, he had grown quite absent-minded. Sorrow had contributed, with age, to whiten his spare locks, at which he had a singular habit of pulling now and then, with both trembling hands, in such a way as to give the impression that he was losing his reason.

After Rose refused his suit, Holdfast increased the rent of the cottage. Taxes had gone up, he said, and he must raise on his tenants in order to live. This was done while Captain Waud was absent in the schooner: he resolved to strike another blow in his own cause, when the young sailor returned, by discharging him from his employ. He knew that Rose was interested in Waud, for which reason he hated the man with his whole heart, and resolved, if possible, to prevent his marrying the girl. There were two ways of doing this—by keeping him down and by separating the young people.

When he saw his schooner burning, I do not know that he was bad enough to hope that his rival would be lost with her; but it is very certain that his blood fairly curdled with hate and envy, when he afterwards beheld the pretty Rose clasping the young captain's hand and looking with such pity into his bruised face.

"I must part 'em!" he muttered, grinning his teeth. "I must part 'em, somehow or other, and the farther off *he* goes, and the—the—well, ahem—the more *danger* he is in, the better for me."

The cause of Simon's joy, therefore, and of his accommodating humor, when Captain Thomas visited him, and spoke to him of Waud's proposal to perform a voyage in the *Watch-fro*, is now made plain.

"Yes," he continued, as his visitor gazed at him, open-mouthed. "I'm willing to come to a settlement with ye. You owe me jist fifteen hundred dollars, wh ch I lent ye on security of your grandfather's vessel, which we were sartin he would leave to you and which he *has* left to you, of late. Well, neaw, I'll give ye jist twelve months to pay me my money, with the agreement that, if you don't pay me by that time, your ship and whatever's in her, belongs to me, no matter whether it's worth more or less than you owe me."

"You are rather hard, after all," gasped the captain. "Still, if you'll make it eighteen months," he added, feeling quite confident that the craft would get home before that time, "I don't know but I'll close with you."

Simon pinched his sharp nose, and seemed to reflect.

"It's a bargain," he said, at last, starting up. "We'll go to Cohasset at once, and have the papers made eaout by Squire Briggs."

"I'd like first to speak to Will about it: he's an intelligent lad, and—"

"What, you hain't a-going to ask advice of a youngster like that—a man of your age—abeaout *sich* a matter, be ye?"

Simon understood his man. The captain was vain, and had not a great deal of self-reliance. He colored and looked ashamed.

"Come!" cried Holdfast, taking his arm. "Come and drink some bitters with me, won't ye?"

The captain had never been known to refuse "bitters," nor could he muster courage enough to do so now. He drank glass after glass, wondering at his companion's generosity. Holdfast watched him sharply, and gave him just enough liquor to make him reckless. Then, leaving his sister, an old spinster, who had lived with him for many years, in charge of the tavern, and taking with him for a witness a great lubberly youth of eighteen—his stable and errand boy—he conducted the captain to the office of Squire Briggs. The lawyer was in, and ready for business; so the papers were soon made out and signed. Holdfast tied them carefully, and put them in his inside pocket, paid the necessary fee after a great deal of haggling, and, chuckling inwardly, returned with his companion to the tavern.

"Neaow then, captain, we've settled matters," he said, as he parted with the skipper. "But my advice to you is not to say any thing to your nephew abeaout this affair of the mort-gage. It might discourage him from going: these young heads, d'ye see, don't always know what's best for 'em."

"I think you are right," answered the captain, "and I will take your advice."

Holdfast entered the tavern, chuckling. He had "killed two birds with one stone," he thought, having not only got his debtor in his clutches, but insured the departure of his rival.

That rival was at this very moment brushing his coat, and otherwise preparing for a visit to Rose. It was the hour when her duties for the day were ended, and he knew she would be expecting him at the cottage. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, and on his opening it, Ruth, looking very happy, entered, with young Harry, who, by this time, had fully recovered his strength and spirits.

"Ah, sir!" cried the woman, impulsively grasping both the young man's hands, and kissing them. "I have come to thank you for saving my boy! God bless you, sir! God bless you!"

"You make too much of it, madam," he answered. "It was my duty to save him, as you put him under my charge. I could not have forgiven myself had he been lost."

"And I can never pay you sufficiently for what you've done!" cried Ruth. "But I'll do what I can for you. You shall stay here, as long as you like, board free."

Will smiled and shook his head. He said he should never consent to that.

"Well, then, at any rate, you shall take your own time about paying me, hereafter. One of the fishermen overheard Holdfast say that he would never put you in charge of another vessel of his; that you was to blame for the loss of the schooner. If I had been there, I'd ha' given him a piece of my mind, I'll warrant you. Well, it's plain from what he said, that you won't get any employment from him, and you may be out of work a long time; and so I repeat that I shall be glad to have you stay here as long as you please without paying a cent."

Will thanked her cordially, but said he hoped he should not be dependant upon Holdfast for work. His uncle, he thought, would give him something to do, before a great while.

They were still talking when Captain Thomas entered. Ruth and her boy then withdrew, and the skipper rushed up to his nephew and grasped his hands.

"It's all right," he said, "Holdfast consents to wait. You shall take the vessel, and I'll give you a good share of the profits of what you get."

Will was both surprised and gratified, for he had not thought that Simon would be willing to come to terms.

"After all," he said, "I believe we're apt to have a worse opinion of our neighbors, uncle, than they deserve. Now here's this man has acted square and fair with you in spite of all the stories about his being so mean-spirited."

"Ay, ay," answered the skipper, coloring, as he thought of the papers he had signed. "We shouldn't be too hasty to judge a man, Will."

"Why not take command of the ship yourself, and let me go as your mate?" said Waud. "I think a sea-voyage would be good for you."

The captain looked his nephew steadily in the face, and laughed long and loud.

"I see through you, Will," said he. "You think it would be a good plan to draw me away from my old haunts. You hope that it'll make me reform and give up my bad habits. Well, well, you're a good lad, and I'm an old reprobate; but it's no use, a man that's gone as far as I have, can't get on the right track again, very easily. I'll be a-going down—down—down, I'm afraid, all the rest of my life. It's no use; you and I've argued the matter, again and again, and although I think a good deal of you, Will, you may as well give up trying to turn me from my course. When a bad habit once gets hold of a man, it sticks to him mighty hard. And now," he continued, glancing at his watch, "I must be off to New Bedford, to see that the craft is got ready for sea. The ship-owners there know me pretty well, and when they learn that I'm to send my craft on a voyage, they'll be ready enough to lend me sufficient funds to provision her."

An hour after his uncle's departure, Waud knocked at the cottage door, which was opened by Rose herself. She looked very pretty with her bright hair tastefully arranged around her pure brow, with the neat white collar encircling the matchless throat, and the simple but well-fitting merino dress. She felt very proud of her lover, and showed it in the light of her soft eyes and the blush that dyed her cheeks.

The young people sat in the front room, conversing pleasantly until twilight, when Waud rose to depart. His companion accompanied him to the gate, and it struck Waud that this was an excellent opportunity to ask Rose to be his wife. Accordingly he did so, and though the young girl was nothing of a coquette, she looked down, tapping the ground with the heel of her boot, and apparently hesitating what reply to make.

"I'm afraid I've expected too much," said Waud, in a troubled voice—"that I've imagined you thought more of me than you do."

Now Rose looked up with half-reproachful eyes.

"No," she said, "you have not. I was only thinking what would become of Mr. Hope."

"Why, he shall live with us, of course," answered Waud. "The voyage of which I was speaking will bring me in money enough to support us three comfortably until I can earn more. With part of it I shall purchase a coasting schooner and go into business on my own account. But, perhaps," he added, playfully, "you will not wait one or two years for me?"

She answered with another reproachful glance, when Will kissed her, and said he was only jesting.

"I am glad of that," she replied. "I am glad you understand me."

"Ay, ay, that I do," said Will, pressing her hand fervently; "the compass isn't better known to me than my pretty Rose."

In this manner they whiled away almost an hour at the gate, when Waud departed.

A few days after, the young man received a letter from his uncle, who stated that he had succeeded in borrowing two funds necessary for provisioning the *Watchfire*. He had set a number of longshoremen to work getting the vessel ready

for sea ; he thought Will would be able to come on and get under way in about a month. He (Captain Thomas) having got through with this business would now proceed to New York, in order to engage Mr. Bunk, an old friend of his, to go as first-mate with his nephew.

Waud was pleased with every part of the letter except where his uncle spoke of going to New York. Once there, he did not think his relative would leave such a "hot-bed of dissipation" until he had indulged his habit of drinking and gambling to his entire satisfaction. Nor was he mistaken. Captain Thomas met with a number of old friends in the city of Gotham, and having a little money still left out of what he had borrowed, he squandered a portion of it in drink and the rest at cards. As he was leaving the saloon, one of his companions drew him aside, and pointed out to him a portly, well-dressed man not far off.

"That fellow," said he, "is rich, and yet very dull. He won't play for small amounts, although any body can fleece him. Now, if you could only contrive to get hold of a few thousand, you might make a large amount out of that chap."

These words made a deep impression upon the half-intoxicated captain. He taxed his muddled brain, trying to think of some way by which he could obtain the "few thousands."

Suddenly, Mr. Hope, who was an old friend, flashed upon his mind. This gentleman was very benevolent, and it struck Captain Thomas that a pathetic letter, in which payment of the debt should be promised in a few weeks, might have the desired effect.

Rushing to a table, he called for pen, ink and paper, which were promptly furnished him. Had he been sober, he could not, under any temptation, have acted in the dishonorable manner he did ; for, with all his faults, he was not a man destitute of principle. As it was, however, he dashed off the following letter, addressed to Mr. Hope :

DEAR FRIEND—I am much troubled, and I can't apply to my nephew, who, you know, is at present too poor to help me out of my difficulty. Here I am in New York, without a cent. God knows, I was never so badly off before ! It is hard, I think, that I should be served this way, just as I have made up my mind to reform, and become a respectable citizen. If I could only get hold of a few thousands, a friend has just shown me

an opening in an extensive oil business concern, where, in the course of a few weeks, I could double my money, and in six months make a fortune. Now, if you could spare two thousand dollars, for, say, just a month from to-day, I am certain I could pay you back every cent, with interest. To-day is the 20th of March: if you send the amount, I solemnly promise to meet you on the 20th of April, *rain or shine, at precisely twelve o'clock*, on the promontory, half a mile from your house, near the old school, and return to you your cash.

Having signed the letter, he sealed and posted it, without delay. It went with the morning mail, and reached Mr. Hope in good season. The old man was seated in his room, vainly trying to fix his mind upon the contents of a book, when the letter was put into his hand. He looked at the handwriting, and shook his head with a puzzled air. His mind was weakened, his memory clouded; he had forgotten the autograph of his old friend. Suddenly a bright gleam shot from his eyes.

"Perhaps it comes from Edwards," he muttered. "Who knows?"

He had never been able to give up the idea that the person he named—the one who had absconded with his partner—would come back again, and return the sum abstracted. He tore open the envelop, and was somewhat disappointed when he read the inclosed page. Then he leaned his head in his hand and reflected. Captain Thomas had once done him a great service—had saved Rose from drowning, when, a child of ten, she fell into the sea. A strong current was running at the time, and the skipper nearly lost his own life in rescuing the little girl. Although his memory had failed him in other respects, Mr. Hope had not forgotten this circumstance.

"Let me see," he muttered, pulling his thin locks, thoughtfully, "I have just three thousand one hundred dollars left out of the money I had when Edwards ran off. The Captain only wants two thousand, and that but for a few weeks. He will meet me on the promontory and pay me on the 20th of April. Well, well, I am sure he will keep his word. *He* won't play me such a trick as Edwards did. He says he intends to reform, too; and it is my duty to help him do that, all I can. He shall have the money."

He walked to his desk and filled a check on the — bank

for the amount required. He inclosed the paper in an envelop, directed it to the address named in the captain's note, and had started off to post it himself, when he met Will Waud, valise in hand, walking briskly in the direction of Cohasset.

The young man had decided to proceed to New York, seek his uncle, and persuade him to return to the village; for, ever since receiving the captain's letter, he had felt a presentiment that the bad habits of his relative would get him into serious trouble. He had informed Rose of his intention on the previous night, and she had communicated it to Mr. Hope, whose failing memory had caused him to forget it until now, when the sight of the traveler on his way recalled the circumstance to his mind.

"Ah, so you are off?" he said, as the two shook hands; then it flashed upon him that the safest way of sending the check would be to entrust it to this young man. Accordingly, he gave him the note, requesting him to be very careful of it, and to be sure and deliver it into the captain's own hands. He did not tell him what it contained, for he knew that Waud was very sensitive, and would not approve of his uncle's borrowing money.

"And now, I wish you a pleasant journey," he said, as Will thrust the note into an inside pocket. "And, see here," he added, suddenly clapping his hand to his forehead with a troubled air. "If you see Edwards—mind you tell him that if he'll come and refund I'll forgive him."

"Poor fellow," muttered Waud, as Mr. Hope turned and walked off, "he is certainly losing his mind. I could not tell Edwards from any other man, as I have never seen him. Besides, it is not at all likely that that rascal ever will make his appearance again."

He stood watching the old man a while, as he moved on, shaking his head and muttering to himself; then he turned and continued on his way.

The young sailor arrived in New York a few days after leaving Cohasset. As he stepped ashore he did what he had done for the twentieth time during the passage; put his hand to his inside coat pocket, to make sure that the letter entrusted to his care was safe. To his astonishment he now discovered

that it was missing! Perplexed and mortified as he was by the loss, what must have been his feelings had he known that the letter contained a two thousand dollar check!

He examined his pocket, and perceived—alas! so much for not having some one to look over his coat, occasionally—that there was, in the lining, a large hole of whose existence he had not dreamed, and through which the note must have slipped and fallen to the deck of the steamboat. If so, some person must either have picked it up or it must have been blown into the water. He hurried aboard the vessel and searched and inquired for a long time, without success. Suddenly one of the boat-hands emerged from the engine-room, and asked him what he was looking for.

He informed the man, who then pointed out to him a short, stout individual, in gray, who was leisurely proceeding up the street.

"There's the fellow who has your letter," said he. "He sauntered aboard of us while the passengers were leaving, and as I disliked his looks, I kept my eye on him, thinking he was a pickpocket. All at once I saw him stoop and pick up a letter. I thought maybe he'd dropped it himself, and so—"

Waud did not wait to hear more. Hurriedly thanking the deck-hand, he ran after the stranger, soon gained his side, and touched him on the shoulder.

"I dropped a letter, sir. One of the boat-hands has just informed me that you picked it up."

"Oh!" said the man, bowing and smiling. "I'm glad you've come for it. I've been trying to find out who it belonged to."

So saying, he produced the letter and gave it to Waud.

Will thanked him cordially, and continued on his way, wondering how the boat-hand could make out a pickpocket of such a frank, honest-looking fellow. The latter stood watching the young captain until he had proceeded about a hundred yards, when, shrugging his shoulders, he leisurely followed him.

"There's a check in the letter," he muttered; "the envelope was thin, and I saw the figures when I held it up to the light. The matter calls for my investigation: I think it will pay."

Meanwhile, Waud hurried on, and soon reached his uncle's

lodgings, which at present were at — Bleecker St. The captain received his nephew with assumed cordiality, while, in his heart, he wished he had remained at home.

"I know what you're come for," he said, "but it's no use. I have arrangements to make here which will prevent my leaving the city for several weeks, perhaps months."

On receiving the letter his eyes sparkled. He retired to an apartment separated from the one in which was his nephew and was soon staring greedily upon the check. He turned it over and over, and almost danced for joy.

"There's a friend, that old Hope, worth having. I will go to the bank and get this cashed as soon as I can."

He entered the other room and asked his nephew if he would take a walk with him.

They left the house together, not noticing on the other side of the way the "stout man" who was watching them.

When they arrived at the corner of Exchange place and Wall Street, Captain Thomas, who did not wish his relative to know he had received a check, requested him to go into —'s dining-house, and there wait for him, as he had a little business to do in South Street. Waud consented, and they separated.

Soon after Captain Thomas entered the bank, the man in gray, carelessly mounting the stone steps, and glancing through the glass door, saw him receive a large pile of notes.

"I thought so," he muttered, "there *was* a check in the letter."

When the captain and his companion, after dining at —'s, emerged from the building and walked toward Bleecker street, the stout man still followed them.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE LOSS AND THE OATH.

THREE days later, having in vain exerted himself to persuade his uncle to go with him, Waud left New York on his way back to his native village.

Now he was gone, the captain felt more at his ease. He visited his favorite gambling saloon on the very night of his relative's departure, and played with the wealthy individual, who, he had been informed, might be so easily deceived. To his surprise, however, this person proved to be a sort of wolf in sheepskin. He staked heavily and lost heavily—at first; but soon won double what he had lost.

Now, from the moment he had written to Mr. Hope for money, the captain had really believed he should be able to pay back, at the time agreed upon, every cent of the borrowed funds to his friend. He had sufficient principle to shrink from the idea of squandering money belonging to that feeble, sorrow-stricken old man, when there was no prospect of his being able to fulfill his agreement. He was now keen enough to perceive that there was none: his opponent was more than a match for him.

"I have thrown away one thousand dollars of the cash already!" he exclaimed, mentally, "and will not spend a penny more for any thing, except to pay my passage back to Colasset, so that I can give Mr. Hope what I have left. The rest I can pay him when Will returns from his voyage: the old fellow will not come to poverty before then!"

He rose from the table and was about to quit the saloon, when an acquaintance invited him to drink. The captain refused at first, but soon gave in. The first glass weakened his resolution, so that he drank many more, and was soon treating a score of new-found acquaintances, quite freely, with Mr. Hope's money. The stout man in gray was among them; he did not drink much himself, but watched the captain intently every time he drained his glass.

It was about twelve o'clock at night when Mr. Thomas staggered towards the door, saying it was time he went home. As he spoke, he fell to the floor.

The stout man, apparently with a great deal of kindness, helped him up.

"You can never get home yourself," he said; "you must allow me to help you."

The captain grunted assent, and permitted the stranger to escort him. They left the saloon, and were soon in front of the hotel where the captain lodged, where his escort left him. The captain, with a great deal of difficulty, made his way upstairs to his room, and falling to the floor, dropped asleep. He awoke at daylight, sobered, but with an aching head, when his first movement was to thrust his hand into the pocket where he kept his money.

Then he rose to his feet with a cry of dismay; both the money and pocket were gone!

He had an indistinct recollection of having been helped home on the previous night by somebody; who it was he could not remember. He hurried to the saloon and inquired; but all he could learn was that his escort was a stout man in gray, who had never before been seen in the place.

The captain returned to his lodgings sick at heart. He beat his breast and tore his hair.

"Gone—every cent!" he groaned. "I will never dare show my face to Mr. Hope again. At any rate, I will not go back, until I have his money for him. But, how shall I get what I owe him? I have mortgaged my vessel to Holdfast. I owe a ship-owner a large sum, too—and—and—oh! I am a miserable, miserable man!"

He threw himself into a chair, and racked his brain, trying to think of some way to get out of his difficulty.

In about one year, if his vessel should meet with good luck, he thought he might pay Mr. Hope. But, the old man might become a beggar, or be in his grave before then; so he must hit upon some expedient for obtaining money in a shorter space of time.

For many hours he pondered, when a sudden thought flashed upon his mind.

A friend of his, living in Cuba, had written to him, a few

months previously, soliciting his assistance in a good, paying business, which, however, would require a great deal of his attention.

The captain, having become indolent, had not as yet thought of accepting the situation; but he now concluded that he could not do better than close with the offer. The salary being large, he might, he thought, return in the course of six months with more than enough to pay the debt that tortured him.

And so, before night, he wrote two letters, one to Mr. Hope, the other to his nephew.

In the first, he frankly explained how he had lost the amount borrowed, stated his intention of going to Cuba, and solemnly promised to pay the money within ten months, if he lived. In the second he also wrote his intentions, and, bidding his nephew farewell, remarked that he should be back in Cohasset long before Waud returned from his voyage.

Unfortunately, neither of these letters ever reached their destination. The captain, being in a hurry to depart, gave them to a boy, who "did chores" for the boarders, and told him to carry them at once to the post-office. The day being warm, the lad concluded to indulge in a swim before going to the office. While he was in the water, a young thief ran off with his jacket in which were the letters.

Fearful that, if he told the captain, the latter would speak to his employer about the matter, and thus lose him his situation, the boy concluded not to mention what had happened.

A few days later, Mr. Thomas obtained the berth of chief mate aboard a bark bound to Cuba. The vessel sailed in about a fortnight after he shipped.

On the 17th of April, Holdfast sat in his tavern, reading a New York paper, when his eye was caught by a certain paragraph in the shipping-list :

"Sailed on the —th, the bark *Henrique*, for Cuba."

The names of the officers as well as the passengers were given; among the former was John Thomas, of Cohasset.

"Now that is news!" ejaculated Simon. "I wonder if that Waud knows about it."

"What's that?" inquired Brooks, who was seated not far off. The other explained.

"Ah!" cried Nick, "the poor lad won't like that news. Mr. Thomas was the only living relative he has, d'ye see, and he won't relish his going off to them diggings, to get sick, and turn skeleton."

"I'raps it may tempt him to go himself," said Holdfast, his eyes sparkling; "that is, providing he isn't tew lazy."

Nick advanced towards the speaker, his eyes flashing such indignation that Holdfast drew back alarmed. Suddenly, however, the sailor paused, and bowed twice, with a curious jerking motion like that of a craft in a chopping sea.

"If I wasn't a man of most remarkable suavity and caution, I'd jist pound your head for ye, Simon Holdfast; for, with all due respect, you're a hog!"

So saying he quitted the tavern, and was hurrying towards his sister's house, when he chanced to meet Mr. Hope tottering along toward the cottage.

"Pleasant morning, sir?" he exclaimed, with his usual bow. "What d'ye suppose I've jist heerd? Why, that John Thomas, your old friend, I b'lieve he was, has started for Cuba. It's in a New York paper."

The old man leaned heavily on his stick, and stared at his informant, several minutes, like one stupefied. A lock of his gray hair was blown over his eyes. He pushed it back, and after he had done so, kept repeating the motion as if he thought the lock was still there.

"O, no, not John Thomas!" he cried, piteously. "You don't mean *John Thomas*?"

"The poor fellow is fast losing his mind," thought Nick. Then he told him that he did not think there was any mistake.

"O, yes, there is," said Mr. Hope. "He'll be here on the 20th of April, sure."

And turning, he moved slowly on, shaking his head and muttering to himself.

Will Wau! was surprised and pained to hear of his uncle's departure. He felt sure that the step he had taken would not cure him of his bad habits.

"I tell ye what I'll do!" cried Nick, with wonderful suavity; "I'll go and try to bring him back if ye say so, and if he won't come, I'll punch his head."

Waud was decidedly opposed to any such proceeding. He thought Nick might have mistaken Holdfast when he read the paragraph, but the sailor insisted he did not. He went back for the paper.

"Be keerful of that paper," said Simon, as he put it in the man's hands; "paper meadow'days brings four cents on the peacock! Be sure and fetch it back, and don't you go to cutting caout the paragraph, as every paragraph cut caout takes something off the weight."

Of course, the paragraph in question removed all Will's doubts. He was astonished that his uncle had not written to acquaint him with his intentions.

From him Nick hurried to the cottage with the paper, and showed it to Mr. Hope. The old man put on his spectacles and read it carefully. Then the sheet fell from his hands, his head drooped, he rocked himself to and fro.

Nick rose and withdrew; he had an instinctive horror of insanity, and he could not help thinking that Mr. Hope was growing insane. When Rose entered, an hour later, she found the old man sitting in his chair, staring out of the window that overlooked the promontory near the school-house. Big drops of sweat were on his forehead, and there was in his eyes a half-wild, half-wondering expression that she had never seen before.

"Papa!"

He neither moved nor answered.

"Papa, dear papa, what is the matter?" she cried, throwing her arms around his neck.

Now he looked at her, his great eyes opened very wide.

"Go away," he said, in a mournful voice—"go away. They are all deceiving me, all of them; there is no truth in the world!"

"Ah, what have I done that you find fault with?" asked Rose, the tears springing to her eyes.

"What? What is it? Have I been blaming you? No, no, it isn't you—not you, child; besides *he*—he'll come back, and bring me my money. It was all I had left, you see, and he'll keep his word, I know he will!"

Thinking it was upon Edwards, his dishonest partner, that his mind wandered, Rose endeavored to recall him to himself

by changing the subject. And while she kneeled by his side, clasping his withered hands and talking to him, his eyes were again fixed upon the promontory, with the same expression she had noticed before.

He spoke to her no more that day. There he sat in the great arm-chair, still looking toward the promontory, heedless of every remark.

"Supper is ready, papa," said Rose, at six o'clock.

He shook his head, but said not a word; the young girl could not persuade him to leave his chair. She brought him some food on a plate, a tempting delicacy which she had got Sarah to cook that day, but the old man still shook his head and would not eat.

Rose was deeply grieved, but she consoled herself with the hope that he would breakfast on the next morning. About ten o'clock he fell into a slight slumber, and fearful of waking him, the young girl would not have him moved. She procured pillows, and put them under his head. Then she sat down watching him, and thus she remained all night.

In the morning when he woke, Mr. Hope still refused to eat. He looked strangely haggard, but his eyes were very bright, and there was a flush on his cheek.

"I dreamed he came back," he said in a broken voice; "yes, yes, I dreamed it, and my dream will come true."

Rose felt too much anxiety about the old man to go to school that day. She sent word to the head teacher explaining why she did not come.

Mr. Hope sat in his chair, watching the promontory until noon, when, feeling too weak to sit up, he reeled forward and would have fallen, had not Rose supported him. She called Sarah, and they helped the old man to his bed. Before night he was in a delirium. He raved incessantly about Edwards, who, he said, promised to meet him on the promontory.

A doctor was sent for; he came and administered a soothing draught, which had the effect of putting the invalid to sleep. When he woke, on the next morning, his fever was over, but the half-wild, half-wondering look was still in his eyes.

"It is so strange that he should go off, too!"

"Who?" inquired Rose.

"John Thomas. He'll come back though, won't he?"

"Perhaps so," said Rose, who had received instructions from the doctor to humor the patient, no matter how unmeaning his remarks.

The old man breathed a heavy sigh of relief, pulled his white hair thoughtfully a few minutes, then rolled over upon his side and lay quiet during the rest of the day. On the following morning the rain poured down in torrents; its clattering against his window awoke Mr. Hope from a restless slumber. He raised himself upon his elbow and stared curiously at Rose, who sat by the bedside.

"This is the 20th, isn't it?" he inquired.

"Yes, and it's a very wet morning, papa."

"He'll come to-day to pay me my money," exclaimed the old man, rubbing his shriveled hands, "and I must go to meet him."

"No, no, you must not go out in this rain."

"Oh, you are the doctor," said the invalid, sinking back. "I suppose I must mind the doctor."

His eyes twinkled cunningly.

"Get me something to eat," he said.

Rose was delighted to think that his appetite had come at last. She left the room to bring him some breakfast. When she returned the bed was empty, and chancing to glance through the window, she saw the old man out in the rain, in his shirt-sleeves, trotting along toward the promontory.

She ran after him to persuade him to come back, but all to no purpose. He shook his head and kept on; he would not allow her to take hold of his arm.

The sight of the invalid staggering along in such a rain and the girl pleading with him, naturally excited a great deal of curiosity. People of both sexes might have been seen peering from the windows at the two as they passed. Just as they gained the promontory, Simon Holland came out of his tavern with an umbrella. Waud was gone to New Bedford, and the tavern-keeper had determined to make another trial toward winning the favor of the pretty Rose. On the present occasion, however, it was curiosity as much as gallantry that drew him from his store.

The old man now presented a pitiful appearance. Drenched and shivering, there he stood, rubbing his wrinkled hands, and turning his expectant glances in all directions.

"It's time he was here; he said he'd be here rain or shine. Ah, who's this?" he added, as Holdfast came and held the umbrella over his head and that of his fair companion.

"What, neighbor, don't you know me?"

"I think I do, but have you seen any thing of John Thomas, yet?"

"Why, no; ain't you heard; he's gone to Cuba."

"To Cuba? You are mistaken; he promised he'd come here and bring me back my money; here's the letter," and he put it in Simon's hand.

The tavern-keeper read it aloud; then returned it, informing Mr. Hope that he had been imposed upon. This, however, the old merchant would not believe. He shook his head, and said he was sure the man would come and bring him the money he had borrowed.

"Well, neighbor, you're welcome to think so, but it's my opinion you'll never get back your cash."

"Alas," muttered Rose, "I now understand what it is that's turned his mind and given him a mania for coming here. I did not know until this moment. If he has lost two thousand dollars he is almost a beggar!"

Holdfast endeavored to throw a look of sympathy into his large blue eyes, and was about as successful as a covetous undertaker, trying to feel solemn when he receives an order for a new coffin.

He believed that the old man's beggary would be the means of enabling him to secure Rose for a wife.

"I am very, very sorry," he said, trying to speak in a mournful voice, "and—and—he needn't be in any great hurry about paying the next month's rent. In consideration of this 'ere misfortune—"

"He's coming! he's coming!" the old man almost screamed, at this instant. "I see him coming!"

And he pointed to a figure, approaching from the direction of the town.

As the form came nearer, however, he perceived that he was mistaken, and shook his head, sadly.

"Come—come papa, you will catch your death of cold!" cried Rose; "let us go home."

"No, no, not yet. He said he'd be here at noon; it isn't noon yet."

"Come on the tavern balcony, at any rate," said Simon. "You'll there be eaout of the rain, and can watch just as well."

Mr. Hope shook his head. John Thomas promised to meet him on the promontory, he said, and he wouldn't leave it until twelve o'clock.

"It's that, neawow," cried the artful Simon, taking from his pocket a huge silver watch.

The old man, however, was not to be deceived in this way. He said he'd remain until the school-bell struck.

Half an hour later the bell was heard. Then, shaking his head sadly, Mr. Hope allowed his daughter and Simon to conduct him back to the cottage.

"This is a feather in my cap," muttered Holdfast, on his way back to the tavern. "I hain't so very bad at playing off the sentimental. I've made her think better of me neawow, than she ever thought before."

The news of Mr. Hope's misfortune spread rapidly. Will Waud heard of it as he was passing through the town of Cobasset, on his return from New Bedford, the day after the scene just described. To a man of his noble nature the shock was great. The idea that his own uncle should have behaved in such a manner made his cheek glow, while his heart was heavy with the pity he felt for the wronged old man and his pretty Rose. He visited the cottage an hour after his return, and found the old man sitting up with the fair girl by his side. Her face brightened the moment she saw him, and she ran to meet him.

"How is he?" inquired Waud.

"Poor papa will never get over it, I'm afraid. He visited the promontory again this morning. The doctor says he thinks he'll continue to do so, while he lives. Nothing can cure him of the monomania, he says, except the payment of the money, and he even doubts that that will, unless presented by John Thomas himself."

"Cruel uncle!" cried Waud, bitterly. "I never dreamed

he could be guilty of such an act. But, cheer up, Rose, cheer up," he added, his eyes flashing. "I'll take the debt upon myself, and as true as there is a blue sky above us, I'll pay the old man back every cent he lent my uncle!"

"Poor Will," said Rose, smiling sadly, "how can you do that?"

"Not all at once, of course; but I can work hard, and I'll have enough to pay him in time. The *Watchfire* will be ready to sail in a month, and I may have luck and fill up the craft with a good cargo in a year. Perhaps if I tell Mr. Hope this it may cheer him and bring his mind all right again."

He sat down by the old man and spoke to him about the matter; but the merchant paid no attention to him, and now and then interrupted him with his muttering.

"Two thousand—two thousand dollars," he said, at length, counting on his fingers. "And I'm a beggar—a poor beggar until he comes to the promontory."

"Was it as much as that?" whispered Waud to Rose. He had not heard the amount spoken of, but had supposed it was only a few hundreds.

The young girl bowed her head in the affirmative, and now Waud was more troubled than ever.

Rose laid her hand on his arm, and endeavored to turn him from the gloomy reverie into which he was plunged.

"You'll never be able to pay such a debt, Will, so you may as well give up the idea, and not worry yourself about it. It is not your fault that your uncle has behaved so."

There was a Bible on a little stand in the corner of the room. Waud laid his right hand upon the Book, and clasping that of Rose with the other, he said, in a quiet, determined voice,

"As true as I am living and God is my witness, I will pay that money."

Just after the young man had departed, another visitor—Simon Holdfast—came to the cottage. He pretended to feel a great deal of sympathy for Mr. Hope, but he could not deceive Rose. She thought better of him, however, than he deserved. She believed he really wished to sympathize, although his nature was so constituted that he could not. He had more benevolence than people gave him credit for. It was

this impression that made her speak to him of Will Waud's intention to pay his uncle's debt to Mr. Hope.

Simon's brow wrinkled; his little eyes and nostrils seemed to grow smaller than ever; jealousy and envy made his heart shrink. Suddenly his face brightened, as if a happy thought had occurred to him.

"Now you speak of that," said he. "I think I can give him something to do, by which he can make money quicker than I had not intended to, on account of his carelessness about that schooner, but for your sake," he added, trying to look very ardent, "I don't know but I will let him go as mate of a new schooner I've been a-buying to carry goods to my store at Honolulu. We're doing a thriving business, Miss Rose—a thriving bizness."

The latter confession he would not probably have made to any other person than this girl whom he was eager to tempt to marry him.

A glad smile brightened her face; she looked very grateful.

"It's all on *his* account," thought Simon, "and it's high time they were separated."

The moment he returned to the tavern, he sent word to Will that "he'd like to see him." When the young man came, Holdfast offered him the situation of mate aboard his schooner, the *Providence*, now loading for the Sandwich Islands, at New Bedford.

"I'll give you good wages," said he, "fifty dollars a month, besides the tenth lay, your share of the ice which will be taken on the passage home. She's to cruise awhile for whales on the passage home, you see, and as her captain is a good whaleman, why there's a chance of your making considerable in a much shorter time than if you took the brig. She can carry a thousand barrels—that craft; and her boats are of the best. When you come back you'll still be able to make a v'yage in the *Watchfire*, if you choose."

Astonished at Simon's generosity, Waud was on the point of accepting the situation offered, which he believed would soon bring him funds enough to pay his uncle's debt, when he thought it would be best to ask a few questions about the captain of the schooner, before entering into any agreement.

"The captain is a good man," answered Holdfast. "His name is Waters—Captain James Waters."

Will had heard his uncle speak of this man as if there was some mystery connected with him. It was said by many of his seafaring acquaintances, that he had once been a pirate, or a slaver, or something of that sort.

Wand knew that such reports are often without foundation, and being more inclined to think favorably of his neighbors than otherwise, he concluded that Captain Waters would suit very well. Accordingly he closed with Simon's proposal.

"And what are you going to do about the *Watchfire*?" queried Holdfast.

"I shall write to my mate to take command of her, until I am ready to do so, which will probably be in about a year. In this way no time will be lost."

Simon started; a shadow crossed his face. He had hoped by giving Wand the situation aboard his schooner, to put off his doing any thing with the brig long enough to make sure of getting the craft into his own clutches. Now, therefore, he was much disappointed; and for a long time he endeavored to dissuade the young man from his intention of putting the vessel in charge of his mate. Will, however, could not be turned from his purpose, and when he left the house, Holdfast fairly ground his teeth with disappointment.

"There's only one way left now," he muttered, "and that—well—I don't know—I hardly like to dew that."

He walked his room with long, gliding strides: his face brightened and darkened by turns, like that of one who alternately invites and resists some evil temptation, presented to his mind. For hours he continued his uneasy walk: then he sat down and wrote a letter which he directed to Captain Waters and posted before night. It was received in good time.

"Humph," muttered the captain, who was a heavily framed, dark-skinned man of middle age. "I can't hardly understand this, but I think I can guess what Simon means. 'Your mate,' he says, 'will be unsuspicious, and honest and frank-spoken, and all that sort of thing, so that if he ain't to your taste, why—I wouldn't have him hurt for the world—but you might contrive to discharge him or leave him on some

out-of-the-way coast, or get clear of him in *whatever way you think best.*

"Now, then," continued the captain, "I think—coupled with this one hundred dollar check, which Simon who isn't at all inclined to be generous, sends me—that I can guess what he means. He has a grudge against this young fellow for some reason or t'other, and so wants me to leave him on some out-of-the-way coast. Hump! I rather think he'd prefer that the coast should be the other side of the river Styx."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### AT SEA.

On the morning of the third day after his interview with Holdfast, Waud started for New Bedford. Rose and he had said their farewells on the previous night, and the mind of the sailor was so filled with thoughts of his fair friend, that he scarcely heeded what was passing around him.

In due time he reached New Bedford, and presented himself to the captain. On the next day the schooner sailed, with a crew of fourteen men besides the officers. She was a neat craft—a topsail schooner of about one hundred and fifty tons burthen, and carried two boats.

Being a good sailor and having a stiff breeze, she was soon out at sea. The spray came flying over her bows, and her tall masts creaked, as she rolled among the long swells of the Atlantic.

"Steady there at the wheel; you rascally lubber!" yelled the captain, as the vessel happened to swing about half a point off her course.

As he spoke he picked up an iron belaying pin and sent it flying at the head of the helmsman. The latter, a fair-haired boy of seventeen, dodged it, and at the same time muttered something between his clenched teeth.

"Not a word!" yelled the captain, now seizing a hand spike, and springing towards the young steersman.



This behavior gave Waud some idea of his captain's temper.

He darted between the man and the boy, and requested the former not to touch the lad.

"Who's captain of this schooner, you or me?" cried Waters, roughly. "Get out of the way."

"Not until you promise not to strike the boy, sir! He has done nothing to deserve punishment."

The captain's face seemed fairly afame with ire. He lifted the handspike, as if to strike down his mate. The latter did not move, but looked him steadily in the eye, saying, in a quiet, determined voice, "You had better not, sir!"

"Better not? Why, blast ye, I'll break every bone in your—"

The handspike, struck by some person from behind, flew from his grasp. He turned, starting to one side, and beheld a stout, rugged-looking fellow, wearing a great sealskin cap, shaped like a glass clock-case.

"Nick Brooks!" cried Waud, much surprised. "How came you here?"

The man took off his cap, and bowed very low.

"I'll stick to ye as long as I live, for your good turn of saving my little nephew. You ain't fit to take care of yourself, Will Waud; you're lacking in those two essential plints—suavity and caution; and that's why, when I learned you were going to ship in Simon's schooner, that I made up my mind to go with ye. I went to Holdfast about it, but he said he wouldn't take me. So I came on here, and stowed myself away in the schooner's hold, where I've been awful cramped up for six hours, a-waiting for the craft to get out to sea."

"Ay, ay!" cried the captain, angrily. "And you'll just be put ashore the first port, besides being 'seized up' and 'logged.'"

Here Waud was about to speak, when Nick motioned to him to keep silent.

"Caution, lad, caution and suavity is what'll fetch him." So saying, he took off his cap, made a low bow, and endeavored to twist his face into a bland smile. Unfortunately, he failed: the captain thought he was making faces, and so

glowered upon him with scowling eye. Brooks saw that scowl ; it roused his quick temper in an instant ; for this man was never so angry as when his suavity was not appreciated. He made another bow, then lowering his head after the manner of a ram, he drove it full against the stomach of the captain, knocking that worthy flat upon his back.

"Wly, Nick, what are you about?" cried Waud, in dismay.

"The old pirate!" exclaimed Brooks, fiercely. "I never made a prettier bow in my life, d'ye see, and yet he didn't seem to mind it."

The skipper staggered to his feet, his face fairly convulsed with passion.

"Seize him! Tie him up!" he roared. "I'll whip the rascally dog within an inch of his life!"

"Easy there, lad, easy," said Brooks, again motioning to Waud to keep silent. "Caution is the word, now."

He retreated backwards, with long, stealthy strides, until he saw the captain rushing towards him like a mad bull, when his temper was again roused, and with a Satanic yell he suddenly darted forward, making another butt at the skipper. The latter, stooping instinctively to shield his stomach, the heads of the two men came together with a crash.

Waud interposed, just as Brooks, whose head was the hardest, seized the bewildered Waters by the throat.

"There, Nick," he said. "Step forward. You've gone too far already."

"Knock him down!" roared the skipper. "Kick him, pound him, and—"

He was interrupted by a loud chorus of warning voices. The crew had come ast to a man, so as to be ready to protect Brooks, in case of his being assaulted by the officers. The party was headed by an old man-o'-war's man, named Bangs, one of Nick's chums. The captain's swordy click turned a shade lighter; he perceived at once that his crew were men who were not to be trifled with. Much against his will, therefore, he permitted Brooks to go forward without molestation, then descended into the cabin to vent his ill-humor upon his steward—a tall, meek man, with a white face. After scolding this worthy to his satisfaction, he exam-

his chart, and finally laid his thick finger upon the Bem-  
ini Islands, a group between the Bahamas and the south-east  
coast of Florida.

"Ay, ay," he muttered, "there's where I'll put this trouble-  
some Brooks ashore; it'll be the least out of my course."

Wafted by a fair wind, the *Providence* made good headway. Her crew were excellent seamen, and were ever ready to obey orders. They soon became attached to Waud, who treated them kindly, and, at the same time, in such a manner as to win their respect. The captain, who was of a jealous, envious disposition, now hated his young mate with all his heart. He had resolved, after reading Simon's letter, to put the young officer ashore on some one of the Pacific Islands; but now his hate urged the performance of a darker deed, to rid himself of the young man.

Mounting to the topgallant yard, one gloomy night, while a heavy squall was approaching, he partially severed the strands of the foot-rope, near the mast, leeward; then returned to the deck. A moment after, when Waud came up from the cabin, he ordered him to go aloft and lay out in the lee topgallant yard arm, to see if there was not something the matter with the lift where it was secured to the spar. Will, ever ready to perform his duty, sprang into the fore-rigging, and soon was going nimbly aloft.

The skipper watched him till he was hidden by the darkness, when his evil heart beat fast with mingled satisfaction and suspense. He knew that the slightest weight on the partially-severed foot-rope would cause it to give way; and so expected momentarily to hear the wild scream, and to see the dark body of his mate, as the man descended heavily to be dashed to death against the anchor.

Straining his eyes to pierce the gloom, he stood bending eagerly forward, the light of the schooner's lantern falling full upon his dark face, which, shadowed by his black thoughts, was almost satanic in its expression.

Meanwhile, Waud continuing on his way, soon gained the fore topgallant yard. Just as he was about to lay out on the foot-rope, however, he heard a warning voice above his head.

"Hist, hist! Caution is the word, lad. Don't put yourself in the way of getting killed. That foot-rope is cut!"

"Is that you, Nick?"

"Ay, ay."

And as he spoke, he slid down to the yard.

"Who cut the rope?"

"The captain. I was laying off in the top, looking up, when I saw him mount the rigging and do it."

"Can it be possible he is such a rascal?"

"Ay, ay. I am quite certain he cut it. I came up here after he went down, to make sure; but, before I could examine the rope, the wind caught my sealskin and threw it off my head, up against the truck. I've just been there, and now we'll see if the foot-rope ain't cut."

So saying he sprung upon the rope, which gave way so suddenly that he barely had time to clasp the mast. Even as it was he must have fallen but for Waud, who threw an arm around his waist, and pulled him into the rigging.

"My caution is certainly wonderful!" cried Brooks, as he drew a long breath; "if it hadn't been for that I'd have gone. And now, the captain shall suffer for this trick. I'll tell the watch of it, and we'll tie up the rascal, thrust him in the run, and put you in command of the schooner."

As he spoke a sudden humming, rushing noise was heard, and a squall, more violent than is common even in the latitude of the Bahamas, pounced upon the schooner, driving her through the boiling, hissing waters upon her beam ends. Her tall masts cracked and snapped as if they were about to part, and her canvas as it was clewed up, slapped about with the noise of thunder. Both Waud and his companion, in their zeal to save the schooner, now assisted the men who had mounted to the topsail yard to furl the sail. The canvas being stowed, eased the craft considerably, although she still sailed with terrific velocity, burying bows and windlass at every plunge, and shipping torrents of water over her weather-rail.

Waud now persuaded Brooks to keep silent for the present about the captain's infernal scheme to take his (Waud's) life. Such information would only enrage the crew and divert their attention from the schooner, which required all their care.

Soon the wind, blowing a steady gale, proclaimed a spell of

severe weather. A heavy sea was now running, and before long, the schooner's rudder-post was so badly injured that the helmsman had great difficulty in working the wheel. As the damage could not be repaired while the gale continued, two men were stationed at the helm. They contrived with great exertion to keep the craft before it, although she lunched violently from side to side.

It was a little after two o'clock when the look-out, who had crawled into the foretop so as to keep dry, was heard shouting with all his might,

"Land, O! Right ahead!"

"Keep off," screamed Waters, springing to the binnacle.

The wheel with much difficulty was raised, but the craft refused to swing off a quarter of a point.

"Luff! luff!" was the order.

Before it could be executed a great sea caught the schooner under the lee bow, driving her edgeways, when, with a terrific crash, she struck upon a reef of rocks.

There was another crash as the fore and mainmast went by the board, and still another as the timbers of the fated vessel were stoven under the lee counter.

Meanwhile the captain and his first-mate, issuing their orders with great coolness, worked like tigers. The wreck of the masts was soon cleared, but the water poured rapidly into the schooner's hold, while the seas made a clean breach over her.

Suddenly down she went upon her beam ends, and the seas, as if exulting, kept rolling one after the other across the groaning hull, so that all hands were obliged to cling to whatever would support them to save themselves from being washed away. At daylight, the gale having subsided a little, they perched themselves on the rigging, attached to the stumps of the masts, and looked round them. About a quarter of a mile away was a small sand island not more than a mile in length and half as wide. Not a tree or shrub greeted their anxious gaze; the island had neither vegetation nor water. Between it and the reef the surges rolled with great swiftness; no boat merely worked with oars could possibly live in such a

A consultation was held. There was only one boat left

and it seemed like madness to attempt to stem the angry waters in such a frail vessel.

The second officer said he thought they might get ashore by means of a line connected with the beach, but he did not suppose there was any man aboard who would be willing to attempt to swim ashore with the rope.

"Ay, ay, give me the line, I'll take it!" cried that man of caution, Nick Brooks.

"No, no!" exclaimed Waud, "you are no swimmer; you'd make sad work of it!"

"Here, you boy!" said Captain Waters, turning gruffly toward the lad of seventeen, "there's nobody cares for you; it'll be small loss if *you* drown, so you shall take the rope!"

The boy, who was an indifferent swimmer, turned slightly pale as the end of the coil, which had been brought to the quarter-deck was roughly thrust into his hands by the brutal skipper.

Nevertheless, the poor youth would not shrink from his task. He advanced to the rail, and would have lowered himself into the sea, but for Waud, who, with an approving smile, now took the rope from him, and fastening it about his waist, plunged overboard to execute the dangerous feat himself. The captain was delighted; he had not been able to account for the failure of the foot-rope scheme, and he now hoped that his mate would perish in the angry sarges. They who watched him thought he would. Frequently buried in the tumultuous mass of waters through which he swam, it seemed as if he must be suffocated before he came to land. One moment his arm would appear, thrown up above the crest of some towering sea; the next his heels, as he was rolled over and over with frightful velocity. He lived through all this rough treatment, however, and was seen at length to spring ashore and fasten the rope to a rock. The men cheered, a boat was ready and a trial trip was safely made by the captain and several of the sailors. Soon all hands were ashore with such light articles as they had been able to bring with them.

It was necessary to obtain provisions from the schooner at all hazards, and a few sailors were dispatched on this duty. Waters, who was anxious to obtain a valuable chronometer, locked up in his chest, accompanied them.

In the course of half an hour the men returned to the beach with some boxes of sea biscuits, a barrel of salt meat, a few breakers (small casks) of fresh water, and some tea and coffee. The captain was not in the boat. Eager to obtain his chronometer, he hurried ashore, the moment he boarded the schooner, and was about to descend into the cabin, when a great sea swept over the vessel and washed him away!

The boat now was so badly injured that no more trips could be made to the wreck until it was repaired. While the seamen were endeavoring to patch it up, the schooner's stern broke off. Thumping violently against the rocks, what remained of her went to pieces soon after. Several barrels and boxes were dragged ashore; every thing else was whirled out to sea by the current that ran around one extremity of the island.

"Ay, ay," muttered Waud, sorrowfully, as he watched a fragment of the wreck drifting past. "There's an end of my being able to pay my uncle's debt, in the way I had hoped to do."

Nick endeavored to cheer him up, by showing off his suavity.

"Don't be down-hearted," he said, bowing until his head almost touched the ground. "Why, blast your young eyes, there's more'n 'one way to kill a cat!"

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE SECOND ATTEMPT.

THE castaways remained on the sand island about a week, by which time their stock of provisions was nearly exhausted. On the evening of the eighth day, a sail being sighted and signalled, they were picked up. The vessel proved to be the English bark *Antelope*, bound to New Orleans with a full cargo. She arrived at her destined port in good time, when Waud and Nick Brooks shipped in a brig bound to Boston. Bad weather made the passage a long one of three months,

after which a week elapsed before the two men succeeded in reaching Cohassett. As they approached the village, one cool morning, they noticed a figure on the promontory near the school, and Waud's heart at once told him whose it was.

Suddenly the old bell proclaimed the hour of twelve, and as the last stroke died away, the figure was seen to slowly descend the hill. It approached the two men, and finally confronted them; a bowed form, clad in a brown, threadbare coat, faded woolen trowsers, and old shoes. The face, thin and wrinkled, with locks of gray hair straggling about the hollow temples, wore an expression of deep care, combined with that puzzled, wondering look, which, ever since he learned that Captain Thomas had played him false, had settled upon the old man's visage.

"Don't you know me?" inquired Will, extending his hand.

Mr. Hope peered into the speaker's face a moment; then drew back, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"You look *something* like him," he said, "but you are not he. He'll come to-morrow, perhaps, to pay me my money—my three thousand dollars, and save me from beggary."

So saying, he turned and tottered off—not in the direction of the cottage, but towards Ruth Butler's back door, which he finally entered.

"The chap is so lost that he don't know which way he's steering," remarked Nick; "poor fellow, I pity him."

"And to think that my own uncle should be the cause of this," thought Waud, his heart full of anguish.

Now, chancing to look toward the cottage, Nick saw a great, coarse-featured man emerging therefrom, with a basket in his arm. He had never seen this person before, and wondered what business he could have at Mr. Hope's residence.

He advanced toward the stranger, and bowing, spoke with his usual suavity,

"Halloa, mate, what right have you up there at the cottage?"

"Well neighbor, that is a question! If a man hasn't a right to his own house, I'd like to know who has."

And he hurried on, as if not caring to exchange another word with the seaman.

Nick uttered a prolonged whistle.

"So Holdfast has sold the cottage?" he cried; while Waud muttered to himself, "Can it be possible that the landlord has been cruel enough to turn out that old man?"

The two sailors entered the lodging-house, to be warmly greeted by Ruth, who was very fond of her brother, and who could never forget the service Waud had rendered her by saving her child.

Through a door opening into the kitchen, both men now caught a glimpse of Mr. Hope, sitting by a table eating a morsel of dry bread. This reminded Nick to speak about the cottage.

"It is sold," answered Ruth.

"And what has become of Rose Hope?" inquired Waud, anxiously.

"Ah, bless the poor child, haven't you heard? She has left the school, and I think that wretch of a Holdfast was at the bottom of it. After you went away, Mr. Waud, this Holdfast, do you see, used to go up to the cottage very often. He always had a hankering after Rose, and now thought it would be a good time to try and get her for his wife. When he found she would not marry him, it made him angry, and what does the sneak do, just out of spite, but turn them out of the cottage? Mr. Hope and the dear girl, who, on account of being so poor, were a little backward about the rent. They hadn't no place to shelter their heads, and it would have made your heart ache to see poor Rose—with her white face turned up to the old man, who was now sobbing like a child—a-trying to console him, when her own heart was ready to break. Well, I took 'em in here, and told 'em they might stay here as long as they liked without paying a cent; but Rose wouldn't consent to that. She used to force her school wages on me every week, until that rascally Holdfast—I'm quite sure it was through him, as some of the neighbors saw him a talking to the superintendent—got her turned from her situation. Then she didn't know what she *should* do, until she read an advertisement in a Boston paper for girls to make dresses. She wanted to go and see about it, but she didn't see how she could leave old Mr. Hope, who needed watching, on account of that habit of his of going so near the water on the promontory by the school. Ever since that money

affair, do you see, rain or shine, that old man has been a-going to that promontory, to watch, as he says, for the man that's to bring him his money. He always stays there until the bell strikes twelve; then he comes back and eats some bread: he'll take nothing but bread, because, he says he's a-beggar, and beggars should be contented with a crust. Many a time I've tried to make him eat meat, but it's no use, he will insist not to touch it. Well, I told Rose that I would look out for the old man, and see that he did not get hurt: so she did: I went to Boston, and is now working for a dressmaker. She sends me the greater part of her wages every week, but I don't use 'em. I'm a-saving 'em all up for her, in a little tin box."

Nick Brooks made a low bow: then he brought his fist down upon the dining-room table, near which he stood, with a force that made the dishes clatter.

"My suavity is perfectly irresistible!" he ejaculated, drawing a long breath, "and my caution is certainly well envelope'd. There's things, however, that squenches a man's perplexess, and Simon is *one of them things*, whose head I'll now go and punch!"

Ruth seized his arm, however, and informed him that H. L. fast was gone to New Bedford, where he intended to remain for a fortnight.

"And he'll hear of the loss of his new schooner when he comes back," said Nick; "that's some satisfaction. A shark like that deserves misfortune."

Much grieved and troubled by Ruth's account of what had happened, Waud left Cohasset, the next day, for Boston. He visited Rose, who was overjoyed to see him.

She looked a little paler and thinner than when he saw her last, but she said she was well, and liked her situation. Once, while walking out with her employer, she had met George Hope, and informed him of his father's situation. The heartless young man, however, replied that he was sorry, but that *he* couldn't help it, as he had no money to spare.

"Ah, poor papa," added Rose. "I'm afraid he's very lonely without me."

"Ruth will take care of him," answered Waud, "but the

time will come when you and he shall be united. I shall proceed to the Sandwich Islands to take command of the *Watchfire*, which I trust will be there when I arrive. Oh, Rose! I shall work very — very hard — and perhaps I may be fortunate enough to fill up my craft in one season! Then how we will crowd sail on the homeward passage, and how glad I shall feel when I walk up that promontory by the school, and put into Mr. Hope's hands every cent of the two thousand dollars! That will restore him to his reason—I feel quite sure of it—and then I will no longer have this weight on my mind—this dreadful consciousness of an uncle's dishonesty!"

The young man remained in Boston two days. Then he departed for New Bedford in order to see Mr. H——, the ship-owner who had advanced the money to enable his uncle to provision the *Watchfire*. Judge of his surprise when he saw the vessel lying alongside of the dock, in the same position as when he left her, six months previously!

This was discouraging, and he hurried to Mr. H—— for an explanation. He was now informed that his mate when about to take command of the brig, ruptured a blood-vessel, and was carried home. He was still confined to the house—would probably remain an invalid the rest of his life. As to the crew, they had all shipped in another craft when they learned what had happened.

Waud now bestirred himself to obtain men for his vessel. As there were at this time plenty of sailors in the city, a good crew were soon at his disposal. He then wrote to Nick Brooks, offering him a first officer's situation, which was promptly accepted. His other officers were selected in good time, so that the *Watchfire*, having all her provision on board, was ready for sea in a short time.

Away she went, one clear morning, bowling out of the harbor before a cool, stirring breeze that made the men jump as lively as crickets, to obey orders.

The young captain walked the quarter-deck in a pleasant mood; now that he was under weigh, his mind seemed to expand. With the buoyancy natural to early manhood, it took a forward leap and pictured the payment of his uncle's debt, the old man's restoration to reason, and pretty Rose, no longer

## PORT AT LAST.

Rose Hope, the mistress of a happy home. The vessel bowling merrily along with a fair breeze was soon off the Brazilian coast, when head-winds were encountered. The craft behaved well, however, steered as she was by good helmsmen. The men were always ready to execute promptly every order issued by Waud, who was much liked and respected by all hands. There was no shirking among them; well-fed and treated, they had nothing to complain of.

Nick Brooks was also liked, although he sometimes ordered the seamen about in a rough manner. As this was always accompanied by amusing bows, and salutes, however, the sailors never lost their temper.

The craft made a steady course of it, and finally drew near Cape Horn. Going round this dreary point, she met with heavy weather; but she bravely resisted it until just as she neared Desolation Island, when an ominous crackling sort of noise was heard forward, as if a rattlesnake was dropping from the fore track to the deck.

"The topmast is a-going," said Nick Brooks, bowing to the captain—for he had lost none of his suavity. "Blast the infernal spar—your uncle's relative ought to have had a new one rigged before he left this brig to his rascally grandson!"

Waud sprung into the waist, and glanced aloft. A heavy gale was blowing, and the mast was swaying like a willow stick with every plunge and roll of the vessel.

All at once there was a crash, and down came the spar, as the weather-shrouds parted with a sudden snap!

The wreck dragged the forward part of the brig under, and the water poured over her decks in a torrent.

Waud's orders were quickly given, however, and the spar was soon cleared. A jury mast was then rigged, and the crippled *Watcharo* staggered heavily as she was brought up to the wind.

The accident troubled Waud very much, as he feared it would cause him to go into port and remain there, perhaps for a fortnight, to repair damages.

Soon the wind, which had been blowing from the west, hauled round more to the north. The brig plunged heavily, and the cold seas swept her decks almost continually.

The crew were obliged to batten down the hatches to keep the water from going into the hold, and to put extra lashings round the quarter-boat to prevent its being washed overboard.

Toward night the fury of the gale increased, and many anxious glances were turned to leeward. There was the northwest point of Desolation Island, whitened with howling seals, about a league off the lee quarter. The brig had passed that before the wind had changed; but now, Waud had serious doubts as to whether he would be as fortunate in clearing a small rock-bound island, marked on his chart a little to the north of where the Magellan Straits opened upon the Pacific. The wind was blowing almost a tornado; the foam-flashes covered the towering seas like a white cloud, and the water was alive with phosphorus. The latter would relieve the gloom sufficiently to enable the look-outs to give warning of breakers; but the warning would be of little use, as it was impossible to veer ship in such a gale.

The young captain was half determined to enter the Straits, and seek an anchorage in one of the little bays on the Patagonian coast. This, it was true, would be a dangerous undertaking, but of two evils, it was best to choose the least; for, if he continued on his present course, there was a chance that the brig, before morning, would be driven upon the rocks of the dreaded island.

"What's your opinion, Nick?" he inquired, turning to his mate, while the latter was shaking the water from his seal-skin cap. "Shall we keep on, or enter the Strait?"

"We must be cautious, Captain Waud," answered Nick, with his usual bow. "We hold a responsible position, and carefulness is our duty. I'd advise trying the Strait. Caution is sartainly one of the cardinal's vartues and—"

A great sea, breaking over the quarter rail, lifted him from his feet, and wou'l have whirled him overboard, if Waud, who had grasped the end of a piece of running rigging, had not thrown an arm around his waist.

Drenched through and through, and gasping for breath, Nick did not forget his suavity. He bowed three times; then, with a grunt of approbation, slapped the captain heartily on the back.

The helmsman now was ordered to keep off. Waud, who

had entered the Straits at this point when a boy, posted himself in the fore rigging and acted as pilot.

"That's he, stea—dy!" he shouted, as the craft swung off several points. "Square in the main yard?"

This being promptly done, the *Watchfire* went rolling before the wind at the rate of twelve knots. Good steering was now necessary to prevent the craft from being caught by the stern; so the mate sprung ast to assist the man at the wheel. By the united efforts of the two the vessel was kept tolerably steadily on her course, although she rolled so that the end of her main topsail yard-arm was frequently submerged.

For five hours the vigilant captain had remained in the rigging, keeping a look-out, when a hollow roar broke upon his ears. He peered eagerly ahead, and thought he could distinguish the outlines of rocks.

"Keep off!" he ordered, "and stand by to let go the cable!"

Every prudent skipper, when off a lee shore, has both his anchors so arranged that they may be dropped at a moment's notice, and Waud was no exception to the rule.

His men sprung to the windlass, and stood in breathless suspense, awaiting the expected command, when, in a voice of thunder, Will suddenly ordered the man at the wheel to luff. A great jagged wall of rock was now seen, looming up scarcely twenty fathoms ahead. As the big barge luffed, she was sent careering with lightning swiftness on the crest of a long rolling sea, past the rugged point, which her lee yard-arm nearly grazed. Then, as she rolled to leeward, ploughing her bows under, the captain was heard ordering the helmsman to keep off.

Up went the wheel, and away dashed the brig, gliding swiftly ahead, until the wind suddenly seemed to leave the main topsail, which now hung flapping against the mast.

"Let go the cable!" shouted Waud.

With the noise of thunder the iron links spun around the windlass, until with a jerking motion the craft swung half round as the anchor caught in good holding ground.

"Go below the watch," said the young captain, quietly, as he descended the rigging. "We can all sleep sound, now."

"Why, where are we, lad?" inquired Nick, who, much

astonished, had come forward ; "this is a good stroke of caution!"

"We're in Sealer's Bay," answered Waud. "I cruised round here for ten months, when I was a lad, in the sealing schooner, *Deerhound*: so, you see, I had a good opportunity to get acquainted with every nook and corner. This is good anchoring ground in a nor'-wester, as the wind is entirely shut out, but with a norther, there'd be danger of our going ashore."

"Caution, then, is a necessity, even here," said Nick, turning to the men, "so you must be ready every one of ye, to tumble up at a moment's notice."

He descended into the cabin, and was soon sleeping so sound that the craft might have gone down with all on board, and he have been none the wiser.

The next morning all hands were on deck early to inspect the bay where they were anchored. It was in the form of a crescent, and seemed a drinking-horn, held out by dreary Patagonia to catch the shore-bound waves. Steep rocks crowded with seals, shaped the crescent, and kept the north-west gale out of the bay. The foam, tossed upward and torn into cloud-like masses, flew over the tops of the rocks, and dropped gently into the smooth bay water, as if glad to escape the tumultuous seas outside. The gale, by this time, had begun to abate : towards noon it subsided into a gentle breeze, and the sun, breaking from the clouds, warmed the air.

After dinner, Waud examined his spare spars, and discovering one which would answer for a new topmast, he set his men to rigging it. The men worked with a will, and as the good weather held for a week, they succeeded admirably. In six days they had the spar to its place, and were fitting the yards.

At midnight, on the seventh, a sudden norther sprung up, and the brig began to drag her anchor. Waud let go his bowline, thinking this would hold her until he could get a line fastened to the rocks at the extremity of the bay, for the purpose of warping her out. The line was put in the quarter-boat, and Nick Brooks, with a good boat's crew, was soon ashore securing it. The task was not a difficult one, and the crew were about returning to the boat, when one of the men uttered a low cry, and pointed above his head. The moon

was partially obscured by a thin haze; still it afforded light enough to enable all hands to see a gigantic native, enveloped in a robe of sealskin, peering down at the party from a rocky shelf about thirty feet above their heads. Perceiving that he was discovered, the giant retreated, and was soon lost to view.

"I didn't like the looks of that chap," said one of the men, gravely. "I hope there ain't many of his sort around us."

"Hist!" ejaculated Brooks, rapping the speaker over the shoulders with his sealskin cap, "caution is the word. Follow my example."

So saying, he clambered the rocks, and hurried swiftly along in the direction taken by the native. He had not proceeded far when he saw the giant gliding on ahead of him. With a yell like a panther's, the pursuer sprung forward, until, suddenly slipping, he rolled headlong into an opening among the rocks. Luckily, several of the seamen had followed him, and as the chasm was not very deep, they hauled him out without much difficulty.

He staggered to his feet and bowed to them.

"Ay, ay, mark my suavity," he said, "and learn a lesson from it. Here am I a-bowing to my own men. I'd bow to a dog, you infarnal rascals; and now back to the boat every mother's son of ye, if you don't want to get acquainted with the toe of my boot! I told ye to follow my example, not to follow me."

He dashed forward and continued his search for some time, but could discover no sign of the native. So he returned to the boat and was pulled aboard.

The information he brought, troubled Waud more than he was willing to own. He knew that the Patagonians generally go in large parties, and that they are always ready for plunder; and he feared they would contrive some means of boarding the vessel. Should they succeed in reaching his deck there would be an end, he believed, of his paying that debt, which had become the great object of his voyage.

Meanwhile, the wind freshened every moment, and the seas were now rolling into the bay, making the vessel jump. Waud felt that there was no time to lose. He ordered the men to go to work heaving up the anchors, and even took hold

of the brakes himself to assist them. The windlass went round merrily, and the ponderous masses of iron were soon hauled. At the same moment a rushing, rippling noise was heard alongside.

Waud sprung ashore, and glancing astern, where the waves were faintly lighted by the breaking day, he beheld the line which had been secured to the rock, trailing along in the water! The rope had parted, and the vessel was rapidly drifting ashore!

"Let go that cable again!" he shouted, springing into the waist—"lively there, lively!"

He was promptly obeyed: down went both anchors, and the *Watchfire*, swinging half way round, lay nearly stationary, within ten fathoms of the rocky coast!

At the same time one of the men, with an exclamation, pointed far away over a towering mass of rocks in the distance, when, glancing in that direction, all hands beheld a large party of natives watching them.

"There's no way them rascals can board us," said Brooks—"that's one comfort. But it's best to be cautious: they may contrive some way to reach our decks. If you say the word, captain, I'll jist take a boat's crew and go and reconnoiter."

"That would be of no use."

"What'll you do, then? I wish we could get under weigh: we're rather close to them rocks. It's a pity we haven't a stronger line on board."

"Ay, ay," answered Waud. "As it is, I fancy our anchors will come home" (drag) "if the wind holds in this direction."

Soundings were made, and it was found that the brig lay in six fathoms.

"So far so good," said Waud.

Half an hour later another cast of the lead showed only four fathoms and a half. The crew exchanged glances and shook their heads ominously.

"We'll be ashore in a couple of hours at this rate," said Brooks. "I don't see what we can do to prevent it. There's no use to try warping in such a blow; the kedge wouldn't hold."

"Something we must do," said the young captain, firmly. "It will never answer to be cast ashore on this coast. We'll never see home again if we are."

He glanced round him keenly. He had noticed several times since anchoring, that the water about fifty yards from the brig, off the larboard beam, was disturbed by little eddies that were continually gliding outward toward the sea.

In fact, the current, running along the coast, seemed to follow every curve and projection of the land ; so that, winding along the crescent-shaped shores of the bay, it took a wide sweep around the extremity of the little harbor.

"Perhaps we might contrive to warp the craft into yonder current," said the young man, "which might carry us safely around the point. Once at sea, we could easily give the land a wide berth."

"It's blowing pretty hard," answered Brooks, bowing low, "and it seems to me, that, with many disrespectful apologies, what you propose would drive us all into eternity."

"I think differently : I think the current is strong enough to give us headway against the wind. Besides, we would be in a measure sheltered from it, close in shore."

"Ay, if there's water enough there to float us. We must be cautious, lad, we must not forget our caution, whatever we do."

He sprung upon the rail as he spoke, to get a better view of the current, when his foot slipped, and he barely saved himself from going overboard by grasping the fore shrouds.

Waud now despatched a boat's crew to make soundings where the current ran. This duty was speedily performed, and the men returned, reporting seven fathoms all the way to the point.

"Up anchors, then!" cried Waud, cheerily. "We'll get out of this scrape if we work hard!"

While the greater portion of the crew were employed at the brakes, he manned his boat with a few men, and carrying the kedge with a line attached to it, just outside the point, he dropped it where soundings revealed the best holding-ground.

When he returned, the anchors were nearly astirp, and the brig, with alarming rapidity, was driving stern foremost towards the rocks, now scarcely four fathoms distant.

The natives were approaching, yelling and brandishing their spears.

"Haul! haul line!" shouted the captain, just as the anchors were lifted.

The men seized the line and pulled with a will, while Waud, leaping upon the knightheads, watched the result with painful anxiety. At first, the brig did not seem at all influenced by the exertions of the crew. She still drifted toward the rocks, and Waud fancied he heard a light scraping sound as if she were just grazing bottom.

"Pull, men, pull!" he shouted, in a voice that thrilled like a lightning stroke to the hearts of all. "*Another fathom, and we are aground!*"

The startled crew strained every nerve, and the brig drifted slower—one more pull at the rope, and she seemed stationary. Then, inch by inch, she began to approach the current. At this instant, however, one of the strands of the rope was seen to part, and fly upward.

Brooks let go the rope, and bowing low shook his clenched fist at the parted strand.

"Blast the rascally sharks who gave us such rope as that!" he shouted, angrily. "They've no caution for other people's lives. The line will come apart before we get into the current!"

"No, it won't; it will hold long enough for that," answered Waud.

The rope, however, creaked and snapped with every strain; the nerves of those who watched it were wrought up to a pitch of painful suspense. Round and round revolved that parted strand; little pieces of tow soon were flying from the rope in all directions.

"One more pull, la's!" cried Waud, through his clenched teeth, "*and we are all right!*"

That pull was given: a sound was heard like the twang of a lisperstring and down went the men upon their backs as the fire gave way.

The brig swung round, and would have gone ashore in ten minutes, if Waud had not sprung to the helm, and put it down, so as to take advantage of one of the long rolling seas that were sweeping into the bay. The sea, striking the brig

under her counter, sent her careering edgeways into the very midst of the current.

Brooks rubbed his hands with delight, and bowing with his usual suavity, struck the young captain a thundering blow of approval upon the shoulder.

"Loosen the fore and main-topsail, and brace up sharp!" was now the order.

The men obeyed with alacrity, and the *Watchfire* was drawn by the force of the current almost dead against the wind, at the rate of four knots.

All hands wore a cheerful look, and as the vessel, gallantly answering her helm, swept around the point, and plunged her bows into the open water beyond, their exultation broke forth in a loud cheer.

"Ay, ay," muttered Waud, as he stood surveying the baffled savages on the lessening coast. "It was a narrow escape, and God grant that nothing more may happen to retard the voyage, and the payment of my uncle's debt."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CARGO.

THE *Watchfire* was soon out of the straits, gallantly bounding upon her course across the white surges of the Pacific. The gale subsided in a few hours, and a spell of good weather succeeded. In the course of a few months after leaving the bay, the captain anchored off the Navigator Islands, to procure his cocoanut-oil. In less than six months, he had stowed all he wished for in the brig's main-hold. Besides the oil, a large quantity of bananas and bread-fruit, enough to last the crew many weeks, were obtained for tobacco and articles of clothing. Some of the bananas being green, were hung up to ripen; in fact, the main and main-topmast stay were so loaded with them, that the vessel, seen at a distance, presented the singular appearance of an enormous fruit tree, growing up out of the sea.

Having a fair wind, Waud now weighed anchor and stood off to the north and west. The vessel reached the Moluccas in March, 1815, and was anchored off Sumbawa, in a little bay formed of beautiful coral rocks that presented a very picturesque appearance. At times the wind, blowing into the hollows or ledges of these rocks, sounded like the piping of reed flutes. The fragrance wafted from groves of orange and lemon trees was delicious, and there seemed to be a singular connection between this fragrance and the soft clouds of sunshiny mist, rolling over the tops of the trees and the bright rocks. Not very far off, the volcanic peaks of Tambora, emitting light columns of smoke, yawned to the blue sky. Occasionally some erratic blast of wind, laden with a sulphurous vapor, caught from the summit of the mountain, would visit the deck of the *Watchfire*. Nick Brooks could never inhale it without sneezing.

"This brimstone ain't to my taste," he once remarked, with his usual bow, "and I don't see why it should come to annoy them that's always behaved themselves. It makes me kind of nervous when I think that I'm named after the one that's fond of it."

In a few weeks Waud had a cargo of valuable spices aboard, and his heart bounded with joy as the men commenced stowing bales and boxes. He would soon be ready, now, to get under weigh for home; his cargo would bring him in a large amount; he would pay all his uncle's debts, and would have enough, besides, to enable him to marry Rose.

These thoughts were passing through his mind, one morning, as he stood by the hatches, superintending the work, when they were interrupted by a singular phenomenon.

The coral rocks forming the bay, began to totter and fall to pieces; innumerable little bubbles rose to the surface of the water all around the brig, and the trees along the shore tottered as if about to go over, although there was not a breath of air stirring. The men paused in their work, appalled—a deathlike silence reigned throughout the brig, until Nick, springing upon the knighthead and bowing, shrieked with all the force of his lungs,

"'Arthquake—it's an 'arthquake, and if we ain't cautious we may all be sent to eternitry!"

As he spoke, the shock suddenly subsided. The bubbles disappeared, leaving the water as smooth as glass; rocks and trees became stationary.

"Work away, men," said Will, cheerfully. "It's all over now; it was only a slight shock. It is not likely there'll be another while we remain in the harbor."

The sailors resumed their labor, and before nightfall a fourth of the cargo was stowed. Waud had just given the order for all hands, with the exception of the anchor-watch (one man), to go below, when a noise like the rumbling of distant thunder was heard, the water hissed all around the brig, and the vessel keeled over on her beam-ends. She soon righted, however, and the agitation of the water subsided.

"Another shock," said Waud, now feeling a little uneasy. "I hope this will be the last."

He remained wide awake and vigilant until midnight, when, no further disturbance occurring, he called Nick to relieve him, and turned in.

"Ay, ay," said Brooks, bowing and rubbing his eyes, as the captain charged him to keep a good watch. "You'll find me as cautious as a cat that's been chased!"

An hour later he was leaning half over the quarter-rail, fast asleep. He would probably have remained thus until morning, had he not been suddenly waked by a crash like that of thunder, followed by a lurid flash. He opened his eyes in time to see the light vanish. The sky was cloudless, the sea as smooth as glass; there was no sign of a shower, to account for what had happened.

Nick uttered a prolonged whistle.

"If my horned namesake ain't at the bottom of this, then I'm much mistaken," he muttered. "First comes sulphur, then rockings and rumblings and crashings and flashings. I expect old Nick himself will appear next. As he hates perplexity, hows'ever, it'll be easy enough for me to get rid of him with my savvity! Meanwhile, I'll just go up into the top and keep a careful watch, as caution is certainly required now."

He was soon in the top, glaring keenly around him. Half an hour later his head dropped sideways against the mast, and he sunk into a profound slumber. Nothing occurred, during

the rest of the night, to disturb him. He was awake when Waud came up, and he described the phenomena he had witnessed after the young man went below.

The captain was puzzled ; a presentiment of trouble weighed upon him. His eagerness to get home and pay his uncle's debt, to old Mr. Hope, made him twice as anxious and careful about the brig as he would have been under ordinary circumstances. Had there been the smallest puff of a land-breeze, he would have got up his anchor and quitted the harbor without delay. He did not like the strange stillness reigning on every hand. Not a leaf or blossom was stirred ; the sea looked as flat as a marble floor ; silent and motionless, the birds that were wont to thrill the air with their flute-like warblings, sat cowering among the rocks. The brig's crew caught the spirit of solemnity that seemed to brood over every thing.

They moved about with grave faces—the cheery song at the tackle was hushed—now and then an anxious shake of the head might be observed. Several hours passed in this manner, and the sun, lurid and half-vailed by a yellowish mist, was almost midway in the heavens, when a sudden rumbling noise, followed by a crash like the discharge of a hundred pieces of artillery, was heard. At the same moment, shooting leavenward, great flashes of fire were seen bursting from the volcanic peak of Tamboro. The most tremendous explosions were now heard, the island rocked like a cradle, the water was violently agitated, the brig plunged and swayed as if about to part her cable.

Glancing seaward, Waud observed that the water in that direction was less turbulent than in the bay. He sprung into the waist and broke the spell that now seemed to reign among his awe-stricken crew, by shouting, in a voice that made every man jump,

"Up anchor there, and stand by, some of you, to lower away the quarter-boat for towing!"

As the crew, with a wild cheer, seized the braces, a great, black volume of smoke was belched forth from the mouth of the volcano. It rolled higher and higher, until, like some huge spirit of evil, it seemed to have blotted the sun out of the heavens. A shadow fell upon land and sea ; a rattling,

hissing, booming noise, as if a hundred red-hot bomb-shells were tearing the depths of earth, was now heard. Then a strange, lurid light spread over sea and sky, as ribbed volumes of flame streamed roaring from the summit of the mountain.

The explosions now were louder than ever; the mountain seemed to tremble to its foundation; the commotion of the sea increased so that the brig occasionally plunged her bows under

Soon the anchor was a-trip; the boat, containing a line, one end of which was attached to the vessel, had already been lowered, so that the work of towing was at once commenced. But little headway could be made in those turbulent waters; the bailer was constantly employed in clearing the boat, which came near swamping several times.

The din of the exploding volcano now was terrific. Sulphurous volumes of smoke and lurid flashes of fire streamed from the lofty summit continually. Suddenly, thick as hail, showers of red-hot stones, sent up from the fiery crater, were observed descending all around the brig. There was great danger that she would take fire, for many of these stones fell rattling on her decks. Waud, cool and self-possessed, issued his orders promptly, and the men were soon busy pouring bucketsful of water over the jets of flame that were almost constantly bursting up from the planks.

Several stones, descending upon the line, soon parted it, and the vessel, swinging round, was forced shoreward by the agitated waters.

"Let go the anchor!" shouted Waud, springing forward.

Round went the iron links; but before the anchor could touch bottom, several kinks caught in the hawse-hole and held it. Instantly one of the men, seizing an ax, endeavored to clear the cable where it was jammed. There was no time to be lost; the rocks were within ten fathoms of the bow; the sailor worked with almost superhuman energy.

And while he plied the ax—while the rest of the crew were watching the result with painful anxiety—a great black veil seemed suddenly thrown over land and water; a darkness like that of a moonless night closed around the wondering seamen, as shower after shower of volcanic ashes, tossed up from the yawning mountain, descended through the air.

The sailor with the ax stopped his work from sheer astonishment. Some of his shipmates crouched low with superstitious horror.

A minute later the brig must have struck the rocks had not Captain Waud snatched the instrument held by the half-paralyzed seaman, and with a couple of blows succeeded in clearing the cable. Down went the anchor, but as the vessel swung round, her keel was heard grating upon a sandy bottom.

"Ay, ay, here we are, stuck fast!" cried Nick Brooks, bowing as usual, although no person could see him. "We must be cautious—mighty cautious now, of a certainty?"

As he spoke, he bowed so low that he bumped his head against the windlass bit.

Meanwhile, the ashes continued to descend silently and lightly, yet as thick as an avalanche. Soon it was almost knee-deep on the brig's deck, and Waud ordered the hands to get shovels and clear it away. The coolness of the young captain impressed his men with confidence; they obeyed every order with alacrity. While they were shoveling the ashes overboard, the boat which had been separated from the brig by the parting of the line, came alongside, and its occupants jumped aboard. Waud soon had another crew in it, endeavoring to tow the brig clear of the sand. A land-breeze having now sprung up, he thought, if he could get afloat, he could easily find his way out to sea in spite of the darkness.

The boatmen tugged and strained, for several hours, but the brig did not budge an inch, and Waud was obliged to let go his anchor, for the second time.

"Well, lad, what shall we do now?" inquired Brooks.

"We can do nothing, except remain as we are until this darkness leaves us," was the reply.

"In the mean while, we must be cautious," said Brooks, bowing. He stepped back suddenly, treading upon the toes of a chunky little Portuguese, behind him, who was playing eavesdropper.

"Ay, ay, beg your pardon, you infernal little lubber!" he roared, with another bow. "Blast ye, who is it? You ain't old Nick, be ye? It's lucky I'm a man o' suavity, else I'd be apt to punch you!"

There was no reply ; the Portuguese was glad to make his escape in the darkness.

Hour after hour passed—the ashes were still falling—the gloom continued. The explosions, however, were no longer heard ; only a low, rumbling noise, gradually growing fainter, was now perceptible. The water was no longer agitated, except by the land-breeze which freshened every moment.

About ten o'clock at night, the crew heard a peculiar swishing noise under the brig's counter ; at the same moment they felt her swinging round.

"We're afloat—the tide has risen and floated us!" cried Waud, "thank God!"

As he spoke, a grating noise warned him that the vessel's bottom was grazing the rocks.

"Up anchor!" he shouted, "and loosen the fore and main topsail ! Lively, men—lively!"

He was promptly obeyed ; the helm was manned as the topsails were sheeted home, and the brig gathered headway.

"Under weigh at last ! Homeward bound—Rose Hope—the debt paid!" mentally exclaimed the captain, and rubbed his hands.

Nick Brooks, whose stout form was revealed by the light of a lantern in the mizzen rigging, stood bowing to the receding but insensible shores.

"Farewell, infernal land of brimstone and ashes!" he exclaimed. "Being a man of *remarkable* suavity I bow to ye, though you've injured me beyond compensation!"

By four o'clock, A. M., the gloom was faintly relieved. At sunrise the crew were overjoyed to see the golden light playing upon the waves. For many miles the water was blackened by the showers of ashes, which had descended without interruption for twenty-two hours, and which were not yet quite dissipated.

Captain Waud now crowded sail to take advantage of the fair weather. This held for a week ; in due time the vessel rounded the Cape of Good Hope.

The troubles of the crew were not yet ended. When arrived off the coast of Brazil, the brig lost her main-topmast, in a terrific gale. A few hours after, it was discovered that she

leaked badly. This did not surprise Waud; he had always thought that the craft sustained injury on that day when she came into contact with the rocks in the island bay. He had hoped, however, that she would bear the damage until she reached her destined port. Now he was obliged to rig the pumps and keep the men at work constantly while he stood toward Rio for repairs. This harbor was at least three days' sail from his present location, and he felt much anxiety lest the water should make sufficient headway into the hold to damage his valuable cargo, and thus ruin the whole object of his voyage. A shadow seemed to pass over the bright face of Rose, and the happy home he had pictured. He saw in imagination the old man—Mr. Hope—lean, wrinkled and woe-stricken, standing on the Cohasset promontory, still calling in a wailing voice for his creditor to come and pay him his money.

Clang—clang—clang! dismally, gloomily, night and day sounded the pumps. Waud pitied his poor, worn crew, toiling so hard, and manfully assisted them. He took his regular turn, and would have been glad if he could have afforded to give the hands their watch below.

This could not be done, however; the men must either work or sink. As it was the water gradually gained on them, and with a heavy heart the captain discovered that a portion of his cargo was already ruined.

By the time the crippled craft entered the harbor of Rio, a third of the stock was unfit for use. There was still enough—the young captain thought—to enable him to pay off his debts; this at least was some satisfaction. The goods were hoisted out and the work of repairing commenced without delay.

Several months elapsed before the craft was ready for sea. The young captain was a happy man, once more, as his vessel tossed the foam from her bows.

Three days out, head-winds were encountered. These lasting for two weeks retarded the passage considerably. With a change of wind, came heavy squalls, and the captain narrowly escaped losing his spars a third time.

The Bahamas were safely passed; also the stormy Cape Hatteras, and now Waud's heart beat high with hope.

One afternoon, just before sundown, Block Island hove in sight, and the night shadows closed round a merry crew.

"Ay, ay," said Nick Brooks, "you may laugh and be as joyous as you like, lads, but remember we ain't in New Bedford yet, and there's still room for caution."

As he spoke, he jumped upon a water-cask, hoping thus to get a view of the island. The head of the cask being imperfect, down it went with Brooks, who suddenly found himself up to his neck in water. He sprang out, and being, as we have shown, quick-tempered, he gave the cask a furious kick. Then he bowed.

"Blast the thing!" he said, "it can't appreciate suavity."

And, ~~with~~ <sup>over</sup> his shoulders, he entered the cabin.

An ho ~~in~~ a sort of shriek rang through the brig.

"Down hard down with that wheel!"

The helmsman obeyed, but before the craft could answer her helm, there was a crash as a large schooner ran astern of the brig, striking her on the lee bow. The smaller vessel got off with the top off her jib-booms; the brig had a hole stoven in her lee bow into which the water was now heard pouring with a hiss and a gurgle.

"Good God!" Waud mentally exclaimed, as he sprung on deck, "am I to lose my craft and cargo after going through so many difficulties, and when in sight of my native shores?"

The main-yard was backed, and a boat containing rolls of good strong canvas was lowered. With this canvas Waud and his crew succeeded in stopping up the hole so that it would keep out the water.

## CHAPTER VII.

## IN THE HARBOR.

On the next morning the brig came bowling into the harbor. Among a number of spectators, watching her from one of the piers, was a tall, rawboned man, wearing a long-tailed broadcloth coat of a sky-blue color, and a sugar-loaf hat. This person was Simon Holdfast, who had come into the city on business, the day before.

"That craft has a familiar look, somehow," he remarked, after a long survey. "It looks mighty like the *Watchfire*."

"Ay, ay, it is the *Watchfire*," said a rough-looking fisherman, who now came elbowing his way through the group, "my sloop was alongside of her, this morning, 'arly."

Simon rubbed his hands; his little eyes snapped greedily. Away he went up the street as fast as he could go, taking those long strides often noticed in men of a grasping disposition.

He entered the hotel where he lodged, then came out and retraced his way. As he disappeared round a corner, the owner of the hotel who, standing in the doorway, had seen him go by, turned to a friend by his side, a man who had seemed charmed by Simon's long strides.

"That is Holdfast," said he, "he is a rich man; he comes from near Colchester, where he owns considerable property."

"What sort of a man is he?" inquired the other carelessly.

"Well, I don't know much about him, although he always turns up here when he comes to the city. He's a very benevolent man, I know that."

"Then I am no judge of physiognomy," said the other looking much surprised; "I could almost have sworn that he was a tight-fisted, miserly fellow."

"Well, I always judge a man by his actions," said the landlord. "About eight months ago, do you see, an invalid from the ship *Tempest* which came in here, after a quick passage from Cuba, put up at this hotel. Holdfast, who was here

at ti' time, gets sight of the poor man, as he was being helped up to his chamber, and he asks me what's his name? Well, I told him that the man called himself Mr. Thomas, that he had been way off to Cuba, and that the climate hadn't agreed with him, which was the cause of his illness. Holdfast showed a great deal of kind interest about the man, and said he would make it a point to visit him once in awhile, as he thought the poor chap needed company to console him.

"After that he used to go up and see the invalid every day while he remained here, until the poor fellow died. He died just eight days after he came here, and what does that good-hearted Holdfast do, but goes to work and buys a coffin, and pays all the funeral expenses himself. Now warn't that benevolent of him—to act in that way for a person that warn't any kind of a relation to him? I think it was, although I'd have done the same for the man myself."

"Nonsense!" said the other, laughing, "I know you too well for that. You wouldn't have given the poor fellow three cents to save him from—"

"You are out there," interrupted the hotel-keeper triumphantly, "for a few days before he died, he called me up to his room and gave me a letter which he begged me to jest as soon as I could. He hadn't any loose change about to pay for it, he said, but would give it to me if I came the next day. I told him it was no matter, and went off and posted the letter at my own expense. It didn't cost me much, it's true, but you see, I'm not quite as bad as you'd make me out."

The two men were still conversing, when Holdfast was seen making his way along the wharf. He hurried to the pier, and engaging a boat, was pulled alongside the *Watchfire*, just as she let go her anchor.

"How d'ye dew, Captain Waud," said Simon a'vancin' or i loosely grasping Will's hand. "What kind of a v'yage? A good one, I hope."

"Not as good as I hoped it would be; still my cargo is worth considerable. Will you step into the cabin?"

"Well, no," said Simon, pinching his nose. "I can't spare the time. In fact, ah, Captain Waud, I have a—a disagreeable duty to perform abeaout—abeaout a sartain mortgage,

respectin' this here craft. Your uncle, I suppose, told yeau  
—”

“Nothing,” interrupted Waud, beginning to feel uneasy. “Please tell me this disagreeable business you speak of, as soon as you can.”

“Well, then, yeau may either leave the vessel neaow, or I don't mind if you choose to stay aboard a few days longer; I ain't the man to grudge you, although I should like to dispose of the cargo as soon as convenient.”

“Leave the vessel—dispose of the cargo? What do you mean?”

Simon quietly drew the deed from his inside pocket—he had carried the valuable papers with him ever since they were made out by Briggs—and showed it to Waud, who now perused it for the first time.

“You see I gave him jist eighteen months and it's more'n twenty neaow; high time I took possession of the vessel and cargo.”

So saying, he glanced round him with the air of a man contemplating his own property.

“Pears to be a neat-looking craft,” he said. “Heaow much did you say your—I mean *my* cargo is worth?”

Waud did not answer. Like one stupefied, he stood gazing upon the deed which Simon had put into his hand. His brain reeled; his heart was full of agony. After all his trouble—his narrow escape from shipwreck, his going into port for repairs, his labor of getting in his cargo, his pleasant dreams of the future, of pretty Rose and the payment of the terrible debt, he must surrender his vessel and her contents to an avaricious rascal!

He could not bring himself to believe it, although there was the deed right before him in black and white, with his uncle's name in the well-known hand attached. No—the deed was forged—Simon was trying, he thought, to play off upon him one of the mean tricks which report said were his peculiar forte.

“I must have better proof of the genuineness of this document, than I have yet seen,” he said, returning the paper. “Not a plank, not even a chip of this vessel belongs to you until you can bring your proof!”

"What's that?" inquired Nick Brooks, who now emerged from the cabin. "What's all this you are talking about? Halloa! Simon Holdfast—the old skinflint, as true as I'm alive!" he added, with a low bow. "Why, how came you here? What in thunder d'ye want, coming aboard an honest man's craft?"

"The craft and her cargo are mine, as it happens," answered Simon. "Here's the deed!"

"What? the craft *yours*?" roared Nick. "Yours? Out of this, you infarnal long-tailed shark, before I chuck you overboard!"

"There's the deed, I tell you!" cried Simon, showing it; "there can be no mistake. Don't ye see that?"

And he pointed to the name of John Thomas, on the paper. Nick recognized the handwriting at once; he uttered a prolonged whistle; then looking extremely solemn, he glided to the young captain's side and whispered,

"Caution, lad—caution is the word—it's our only hope."

Glancing towards Holdfast, he saw this person's face now lighted up with an exultant grin, which excited his ire in a moment. The next, with a yell like a wild Indian's, he sprung upon the fellow and seizing him by the hair of the head, was about to punch his long nose, when Waud interposed.

He obeyed the young captain, releasing his hold of Simon's hair, but not until he had pulled out a handful.

Then he made his usual bow, throwing the hair overboard, as he did so.

"It's lucky I'm a man of suavity," he said, "or I'd sartainly have flattened the rascal's nose!"

"You shall pay for this," said Holdfast, indignantly. "Not a bit of employment will yeaou ever get eaout of me after this. As to yeaou," he added, turning to Waud, "yeaou say you want proof. There's no more needed than what's in this document. Still, I ain't the man to refuse obligin' a neighbor. So I'll jist write on for the witnesses—my stable-boy, Tom, and Squire Briggs, who made eaout the papers."

With these words, he departed.

Nick Brooks now endeavored to cheer up the young captain, who, leaning against the quarter-rail, seemed buried in a gloomy reverie.

"Keep a good heart, Waud," said the mate, bowing as usual, and endeavoring to twist his rough face into an expression of bland suavity. "You ain't as bad off as you might be. There was an uncle of mine, who at your age was hung for mutiny—jist think of that. Besides, if we act with caution, we can get clear of that infarnal Holdfast, yet."

Such consolation he continued at intervals to offer throughout the day, and when at ten o'clock at night he saw Waud "turn in" (go to bed) he flattered himself that he had exerted a salutary influence over him.

"Ay, ay, my suavity is parfectly wonderful," he soliloquized. "Of a sartainty it would have the effect of turnin' a lion into a lamb."

He entered the state-room, and bowed several times to his reflection in the looking-glass. Then he stood still, winking at himself, first with one eye and then the other.

"Caution is the word," he said, in a whisper. "Ay, ay, Brooks, now is the time for caution."

He mounted to the deck, where he remained until he thought Waud was asleep, when he made his way to the forecastle. The men, seated upon chests, rose from their seats when he entered.

"Keep you seats, every mother's son of ye!" roared Brooks, bowing, and stamping the deck with his boot. "I've come here to speak to ye on a matter of caution."

As he lifted his head, it came into contact with a shelf containing a number of pots and pans which now came tumbling down with a great clatter.

"Men," continued Brooks, jumping on a chest. "I'll begin with the statement, that our captain is to be robbed of brig and cargo provided we let him. Shall we let him?" asked Nick, with a graceful sidelong bow; "shall we, eh? Speak, ye beef-eating rascals, speak!"

"No, no!" was heard on all sides.

"Well, then, in order to prevent it, we must be cautious, we must get out of this. We must get under weigh, and make for some other port; so up ye go, on deck," continued Brooks, following up his words with rapid bows, and radiating smiles. "On deck, every infarnal lubber of ye, to weigh anchor!"

**The men cheered.**

"Silence," thundered the mate, "I told ye to be cautious!" jumping up and down on the chest with such violence that the cover gave way with a loud crash. "It's lucky I'm a man of suavity, or I'd punch every one of your heads!"

The sailors took their places at the brakes, and the anchor was soon astir. Next the topsails were sheeted home, and the big boat began to gather headway, when Ward, who had kindly fallen into a doze, sprung on deck.

"Halloo there, Brooks, what does this mean?"

"It's caution," answered the mate, rushing aft, and bowing so low that his seal-skin cap fell from his head. "I concluded, d'ye see, that it would be best to make for some other port, and sell our cargo, when we could snap our fingers at Holdfast."

"No, no, we must do nothing of the kind," answered the captain. "Let go that anchor!"

He was obeyed, and the *Watchfire* was again motionless.

"Well!" cried Brooks, bowing, and kicking over an empty cask with his boot. "I s'pose this is what's called jurisprudence. Neither my suavity nor caution seems appreciated aboard this craft; but the captain saved my little nephew, and is a good chap otherwise, so I ain't the man to go against his orders!"

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**CHAPTER VIII.****THE JOURNEY.**

THE big stable-boy who worked for Simon Holdfast was seated under the tavern shed, watching an old man toiling up the steep promontory near the school-house. The old man was Mr. Hope. He walked with feeble, tottering steps, leaning heavily upon his stick, his thin, gray hair waving upon the wind.

"He hain't got many more years longer to live," muttered the boy. "He'll be in his grave in a few months. Halloa! there's Rose!"

The young girl emerged from a little wooden building not far off, and ran to assist her old friend up the steep ascent.

Her Boston employer having given up business, she had returned to the village, and with much trouble contrived to set up a private school. Holdfast endeavored to throw obstacles in her way, advising parents not to patronize her; but his efforts were in vain. Most of the older villagers had known Rose from a child, and there was not one who did not love and respect her. In a short time she had as many scholars as she could attend to, and although her earnings were small, yet she had already contrived, besides paying board money, to buy Mr. Hope a new coat and good shoes, of which he was sadly in need. With kindly ways and cheering words, she endeavored, day after day, to dispel the strange mania which still clouded the brain of the old man. He would only shake his head, however, and insist that John Thomas would yet come to the promontory and pay him his money. Every day at about ten o'clock, he would be sure to make his way to the little hill and stand there watching carefully every person that approached, until the striking of the twelve o'clock bell. Rose, whose scholars were generally at recess whenever the old man passed, would run out to help him along.

As she did so, on the occasion just mentioned, a person was seen hurrying towards them from a distance.

Mr. Hope clasped his wrinkled hands, and faltered forth a cry of joy.

"Here he comes," said he, "here comes Mr. Thomas to pay me my money!"

"You are mistaken; Mr. Thomas is dead. He died in New Bedford. Ruth Butler, as I've told you many times dear papa, received a letter from him two days before his death."

"O, no," replied Mr. Hope, "there's some mistake. He would have sent me my money before he died, if what you say is true."

"He would if he had had it. But he wrote that while he was beginning to earn money pretty fast, he was taken ill, and so obliged to come home with what he had—a few dollars over fifteen hundred."

"And why didn't he send me that?" inquired the old man, eagerly. "Ho! ho!" he continued, with a weird laugh, "you see your story is a poor one. He is not dead—He will come to me yet."

"His reasons for not sending you what he had, he did not state in the letter. By the looks of the writing it was plain that he wanted to say more, but was too weak to write another line."

The old man shook his head, and, smiling incredulously, kept his eyes fixed upon the person who was approaching. It proved to be the postman, who, passing the girl and her companion, hurried on to the tavern, and gave a letter to Simon's sister, who stood in the doorway.

"Captain Waud arrived at New Bedford!" ejaculated the spinster, when she had finished reading. "John to come on without delay—vessel and cargo claimed by Simon. Well, now, this is news, indeed."

Her voice being loud and sharp, the stable-boy heard every word, and was not therefore surprised when his mistress ordered him to get ready to go to New Bedford as soon as possible.

He was soon tramping along toward Cohasset, and not being very discreet, he informed an acquaintance—a fisherman who boarded at Ruth Butler's, and whom he happened to meet on the way—that Captain Waud had arrived with his vessel in New Bedford.

Before sundown this was known all over the village, and Rose Hope thrilled with joy at the news. The moment the young girl returned from school, Ruth, who was quite unwell, sent for her. When Rose came, the invalid quickly drew from under her pillow a sealed envelop directed to Captain Waud.

"I can not even guess what this contains," she said. "It was sent to me with that letter I received from Mr. Thomas. To no person—not even to you—have I hitherto spoken about it, for as you will see by the writing on the outside, I was told to keep my having it a secret, and to deliver it into the captain's own hands, as soon as possible after his arrival in port. God knows, nothing would please me better than to do so; but I am too feeble to walk."

She gave the envelop to the young girl, who read on the margin as follows:

DEAR MADAM:—I feel that I can trust you to execute a dying man's request. Put this in Captain Waud's own hands as soon as possible, when he reaches New Bedford. Don't trust it to the pos', nor allow any person to know you have it. It's early delivery to my nephew may *save him from a great injury!*"

"I will deliver the note!" cried Rose. "Ah, if I should be too late! Poor, brave Will!"

She was hurrying from the room, when Ruth called her back.

"You can not leave Cohasset to-day," said the invalid; "the boat has gone ere this. You will have to wait a couple of days; perhaps a week."

"Then it will be too late," said the young girl, shuddering. "I must start to-day. My friend, Ellen Wakeham, will take charge of my school while I'm gone."

"My poor child, how can you?"

"I must," was the logical reply, accompanied by a resolute stamp of one little boot.

She would not stop to say another word; but hurrying to her room, she was soon equipped for her journey. An examination of her pocket-book, revealed just one dollar—a small sum to carry on a long journey. There was no danger of her being robbed, at any rate.

She hurried from the house, and being a brisk walker, reached Cohasset in just twenty minutes. As she moved on she heard a small voice behind her, shouting her name, and turning, she saw a little boy running towards her. He came up, panting, put a square parcel in her hand, saying that Mrs. Baker sent it, and then ran off. She opened the parcel to discover a small tin box, the cover of which on being raised, disclosed ten or twelve silver dollars.

"Poor woman," said Rose. "She has a hard time to get along, and yet is kind enough to send me this! I will use of it as sparingly as possible, and pay her back every cent!"

She hurried on and soon reached the pier. There was only one vessel moored alongside of it; a schooner loaded with lumber. Seeing a man and a female on the quarter-deck, Rose advanced and addressed herself to the woman.

"Where is this schooner bound?"

"To New Bedford," was the reply.

"When will you start?"

"P'raps in three days, p'raps not in a week."

Rose looked disappointed, noticing which the woman continued,

"If you want to go to New Bedford, and are in a hurry, your best way would be to get some conveyance to Boston where you'll find plenty of vessels ready to take you where you want to go."

"Thank you," answered Rose, and with an elastic step, she was soon on her road to Boston, distant about twenty miles from Cohasset. If she should find any conveyance she would be very glad; if she did not, she would walk the whole way!

She had proceeded about five miles when she heard a rumbling noise behind her. Turning, she beheld a wagon, driven by a venerable-looking farmer. He stopped his horses when he came up to her, and spoke.

"Well, now, my child, where be ye going?"

"To Boston."

"Why, you don't say? What be ye going to do there?"

"Take passage for New Bedford."

"Gosh! A poor little thing like you going so far! Jist you get into my wagon, and I'll give ye a lift to my home, where you can stop and rest, and where my gals will be mighty glad to see ye. My son John will harness up to go to Boston in a day or two, with my sister Jerusla who's on a visit to our house, and you can then go—"

"Thank you; but I could not wait. I must keep right straight on."

"So you're in a mighty hurry, be ye? That's too bad! I'll help you along a piecee, at any rate, as I'm going straight on about ten miles. Come, child, get into the wagon."

Rose was glad to accept the invitation. When she stepped out of the conveyance, she had only five miles farther to go, so that she easily reached Boston before night. She could find no steamer, ready to start—for steamers were not so plenty at that time as they are now—but she engaged passage in a schooner, the *St. George*, which was to sail in an hour.

The vessel left the harbor with a fair wind, which lasted until she rounded Cape Cod, when a north-east gale was encountered. The schooner rolled and plunged violently, so that several of her passengers were troubled with sea-sickness. Rose, however, although she had never before been to sea, was not at all affected by the motion of the craft.

For three days, the vessel battled with head-winds; to Rose this time seemed a month. Pale and anxious, she would watch hour after hour, hoping for a change, so that the schooner might continue on her course. She feared she would arrive too late to befriend her lover.

At last the wind hauled round fair; every inch of canvas that could be carried, was now crowded on the *St. George*, and she stood gallantly on her way.

After she had passed Nantucket, and while she was beating up between Block Island and No Man's Land—for the adverse winds had driven her thus far out of her course—a strong sou'-wester with a heavy sea, that made every thing strain and creak, came pouncing upon her, driving her along under bare poles, like a young colt, run mad. Away went her jib and fly-jib-boom, and her masts, bending like whale-bone, seemed about to go every moment. While the men were endeavoring to batten down, she plunged bows and windlass under, slipping a great sea, that tore the hatchets from their hands, and sent them (the hatchets) whirling far to leeward. The seas now passed into the hold in perfect torrents; and, before the men could step up the opening, the craft was well-nigh water-logged.

The pumps were worked incessantly, but the water kept gushing, tearing away the canvas from the hatch-combings as fast as it was secured.

The captain, therefore, did the best thing he could to under the circumstances, kept his craft before it, until he sighted the south coast of Rhode Island, when he made for a little bay sheltered from the gale in which he finally anchored.

Then he informed his passengers that he would be obliged to remain where he was for a week, to make a few repairs. All the passengers, except Rose, signified their willingness to wait.

"I can not stop so long as that," she said. "How far is New Bedford from here?"

"About twenty-five miles by land," answered the captain. "and by water it is—"

"I will go ashore, if you please! I shall walk to New Bedford if there is no other way to get there."

The captain endeavored to dissuade her from her intention, but was unsuccessful. So she was pulled ashore, and being unable to find any conveyance, she at once commenced her journey on foot. She walked for several hours through a wild country, without seeing a single house, when, tired and hungry, she sat down near the edge of a thick piece of woods to rest. She did not stop long, but, having eaten a few sea-biscuits she had brought with her from the schooner, she resolutely continued on her way, until she arrived upon the bank of a wide creek. Now she paused, vainly looking up and down for some bridge, by means of which she might cross. The twilight shadows were beginning to gather, and she was anxious to reach some farm-house in which she might pass the night. The cool March wind chilled her frame, and her feet were much bruised by walking over rough ground. Nevertheless, she finally turned to her right, and followed the bank of the creek, still hoping to find a bridge. Just at dark she thought she saw the faint outlines of one ahead of her. She soon reached it, but was unable on account of the gloom to see it very plainly. Otherwise, she would not have attempted to cross it, for, when too late to help herself, she discovered that it was rotten.

Crash went a plank beneath her feet, and she found herself in the water, clinging to the fragment. She called for help, but no help was at hand. The current carried her swiftly along, and, finally, the rotten wood to which she clung, parting in the middle, left her without support. She had given up all hope, as she felt herself sinking, when, to her great relief, her feet struck the bottom; the water was only up to her neck. Her joy was of brief duration, for the current whirling her forward, she discovered to her dismay that she was now going under water. What she had thought was the bottom of the creek, was simply the top of a flat rock beneath the surface. She threw out her arms wildly, and

grasped the branch of a tree drooping to the surface. By this she was drawing herself along towards the bank, when the branch parted. She threw herself forward as she was sinking, and was glad to find herself close enough to the shore to grasp a bush, and draw herself to the bank, on that side of the creek which she had been so anxious to reach. Fatigued and shivering, she staggered on her way, hoping soon to see a light; but she was disappointed.

When she had proceeded a few miles, she felt unable to go a step further, so she framed a nice bower of some dry branches around a small cave in a rock, and sat down to rest. After a while she dropped into a light slumber, from which she woke at daylight but little refreshed. She felt weak and faint, her feet were bruised, her limbs ached, yet she nerved herself to rise and continue on her way. She hoped to get to New Bedford, and put the envelop into her brother's hands before night. Her course now lay through a large field covered with prickly thorns and bushes, that caught in her dress and gaiters at every step. Her white hands were soon covered with scratches, from her efforts to shield her face from the briars, and the soles of her boots were partially ripped by sharp stones.

Added to the difficulties of travel, there was the harrassing fear that perhaps she was going the wrong way. Ahead of her lay a dark piece of woods, whose somber depths looked interminable, and whose gloomy appearance alone would have deterred many a girl from entering it. Rose, however, pushed resolutely forward, and was soon in the very heart of the forest.

Now she was somewhat bewildered as to the direction she was pursuing, and she had paused a moment to consider, when the barking of a dog suddenly broke upon her ear. She followed the sound, and was glad at length to discover a small wooden building, at one of the windows of which sat a female. She came to the door as Rose approached, and stared at her curiously. Notwithstanding her coarse manners, however, she soon showed she was not devoid of the kindly feelings natural to her sex. When the young traveler explained the accident she had met with, the woman invited her in, made her sit down by a table, and put before her some brown bread and a cup of tea.

She would take no pay, and when the young girl, feeling much strengthened, rose to depart, her hostess, finding she could not persuade her to stay longer, accompanied her a considerable distance in order to show her the road leading to New Bedford.

Thirteen miles yet intervened between the young girl and the city, and part of the way was difficult ground to travel over. When Rose had accomplished half the distance, her limbs fairly tottered under her. Now she clenched her little fist, and her eyes were bright with determination.

"I will go on!" she said. "I must and shall be in the city before night!"

It was about four o'clock, when almost fainting from fatigue, she came to the outskirts of the town and entered a wayside inn, at the door of which she had seen a round-cheeked, blooming damsel. With the assistance of this female and another cup of tea, Rose refreshed herself; and then made such alterations in her appearance as she felt were sadly needed on account of the hardships she had encountered. Soon after, she left the inn, and entering the town, repaired to the landing with all possible dispatch. A thick fog covered the water so that she could not see the vessels anchored in the harbor. She looked round her for a boatman and saw one not far off; a lad of seventeen.

"I would like to go to the Watchfire," she said. "Will you carry me there?"

"Yes, ma'm."

She took her place in the boat and the lad shoving off, seized his oars.

He had pulled for some time when he stopped.

"What is the matter?" inquired Rose.

"She laid about here, the last time I saw her, which was a week ago. She may have moved since, and if so it'll be hard to find her in this fog."

"I am so sorry!" cried the young girl. "It is of the greatest importance that I should get aboard as soon as possible."

"Watchfire a-hoy!" shouted the lad, several times, but there was no answer.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, and I'll do my best to find her, but perhaps I won't be able to."

Again he seized the oars and pulled in many different directions, but without success.

Rose was in despair.

"We had better go ashore," she said. "I will get another boatman. You are too tired to pull any more."

The boy glanced around him with a troubled air; then took to his oars again. He tugged and tugged, awhile, when he paused, peering anxiously ahead.

"Are we almost to the shore, yet?" inquired the young girl.

"I don't know, ma'am. The truth is I'm new at this place, and feel lost in the fog."

Rose now began to be alarmed. The shadows of twilight were just beginning to blend with the fog, and she feared the boat might be run down, if not ashore before night.

The lad endeavored to quell her fears, but his anxious face showed that he was ill at ease.

He seized the oars once more, and again pulled for a long time.

"There, you'd better stop," said Rose; "perhaps we are going from instead of toward the shore."

The darkness of night was by this time around them. The boat rocked violently as the wind increased, the waves breaking over both gunwales; and the lad began to bail out.

Suddenly there was a rushing, roaring noise directly ahead; some kind of vessel evidently was approaching.

"Keep off there!" shouted the boy, "or you'll ran us down!"

He was not heard; the bow of the vessel, which was probably a schooner's, struck the boat lightly as it swept past, yet with sufficient force to crack some of the planks so that the water entered rapidly.

The lad took off his jacket and stuffed it into the largest crack; but the water still came in so fast that he was obliged to use his bailer with vigor to keep the little craft from swamping. In spite of all his efforts the water gained on him, and soon the boat was half filled.

Much alarmed, Rose was beginning to give up all hope, when the boy's shouts brought another boat alongside, manned by an old, experienced oarsman.

On learning that Rose wished to go aboard the *Watchfire*, he said that he would not attempt to find the vessel on such a foggy night. It was anchored away out in the stream, he remarked, and the young lady must wait until morning.

"This man is old Harry Wilkes," whispered the boy to Rose. "He's very smart, they say, and is well educated—has been to college. He got reduced, somehow, and now he's forced to get his living in this way—by pulling a boat."

"Harry Wilkes," murmured Rose. "It seems to me I have heard Waud speak of some person by that name."

"Oh, he's well known hereabout," replied the boy.

Rose turned to the old man.

"I think I have heard Captain Waud, of the *Watchfire*, mention your name to me," she said, "in connection with his sea experience when he was a boy."

"Waud—Waud," muttered Wilkes—"I certainly have heard that name, but it must have been some years ago. I have it," he suddenly added, clapping a hand to his brow. "Waud was the boy who first sighted the mirage; the lad who was in the whaling and sealing vessel, which I took passage in in 18—."

"The mirage?" said Rose, inquiringly.

"Yes; has this Waud of whom you speak never told you about it?"

"No," she replied; and perceiving by the light of his boat-lantern that she seemed much interested, the old man continued:

"As you are acquainted with the person you mention, I have no doubt that you will be pleased to hear the story, young woman."

"I certainly shall," was the reply.

"Well, then, you have probably heard of the phenomenon of the mirage?"

"Oh, yes."

"This phenomenon is quite common in the Northern and Southern seas. Sometimes when the sun's rays fall through a light mist upon the ice, the bergs are seen, apparently in an inverted position, hanging, like so many huge icicles, from the blue roof of the sky. Ships and boats observed from a distance are often magnified to three times their

natural size, and the height of towering cliffs along the sea-shore is frequently made to seem interminable.

"The name of the vessel of which I have spoken was the *St. Paul*; and, as I have already told you, she was half sealer and half whaler. Though principally manned by Englishmen and Americans, her captain was a Russian, named Petrovolski.

"When we arrived off the latitude of Cape Horn, he kept on steering south, much against the advice of his first-mate and other officers, who feared that we would get lost among the vast floes of the Antarctic. The Russian seemed insensible to cold. He would sit for hours in the maintop-gallant cross-trees, right in the teeth of the south-pole breeze, quietly smoking his pipe. The ice had no terrors for him; he was never satisfied when out of sight of it, and would probably soon have pined away in a torrid clime. His dexterity in working his vessel through the labyrinthian water-paths, among the bergs, was truly wonderful. He would pass, with the utmost coolness, within a hair's breadth of stupendous crystal masses, that seemed ready to topple over upon the ship, or crush her planks between their jaws. Once I heard him laugh while others shuddered with fear. It was when the *St. Paul*, under his daring hand, reeled, quivering, on her beam-ends, as she forced a passage through a narrow channel in a floe, by knocking off the head of a huge ice-sphynx that protruded in her way.

"Day after day passed, and not a single spout had yet been seen; the ship, spurning the ice with her strong keel, still pointed her boom toward the pole. Meanwhile the weather grew colder and colder, the ice thickened, the mist congealed on the shrouds, the men could not procure clothes enough to keep themselves warm. Now there was a great deal of grumbling fore and aft, and some of the boatsteerers threatened to 'knock off' duty. Nearly seven months had passed since we left the Western Islands, and it was time we returned north, as there was danger of our soon being blocked in by the ice. Menaces and threats made no impression on the Russian, with a cold glitter in eyes which were half-hidden by his frost-browned beard, he would take his station near the capstan and stand, immovable as a statue, watching the grumblers for

hours. I think it was his impassibility that prevented mutiny. Anger directed against him would cool like sparks showered upon ice.

"So we continued on toward the south, until our further progress was barred by far-extending floes, in which no opening was visible. Then we thought that Petrovolski would surely veer ship on his return; but we were mistaken. The vessel's course was simply changed to east by south, and in a few days, after many narrow escapes from being stoven, we beheld a snowy headland, looking like a white giant driven from the sea to warn us away from the thousands of legs beyond, upon which the sun glittered with enticing splendor. We saw an unusual number of seals, watching us from their crystal towers, and noticed that the walrus, thrusting its long tusks out of the water, was here much larger than in the vicinity of the Cape. I was leaning over the quarter-rail, watching one of enormous proportions, that had come up alongside, when the lookout aloft gave notice that he saw a dead whale ahead. Petrovolski rubbed his hands, and I saw a glad smile break over his frosty countenance; he ordered the men at the helm to keep steady, and the crew to stand by the boats.

"The vessel was now running along south-east, at the rate of four knots, under whole topsails. Soon, however, we were obliged to lie to, on account of the ice in our way.

"'Shall I lower?' inquired the mate.

"'Yes, clear away the four boats,' was the answer, 'and be quick about getting that fish alongside, as there's a fog coming up.'

"The boats were soon in the water. Curiosity led me to jump into one of them—the first officer's, to which the boy Waud also belonged.

"We had some trouble in forcing our boats through the ice, and made slow headway. In fact the whale was still some distance from us when the fog began to thicken, and very soon we could no longer see the object we were after. We had taken its bearings, however, and so contrived to keep upon the right course. Two hours elapsed before we succeeded in getting alongside the fish, by which time the wind had died away and the current must have carried us far down our

vessel. We could not, therefore, think of towing our prize as yet; we must wait for a change of tide. Night closed around us before this took place; and now we were prevented from working by the ice, which kept closing in upon us from all sides, and which had become so closely packed that we could not move the boat. Soon we were obliged to quit the whale and put about, in order to save ourselves from being forced ashore and crushed between the land and the floating ice-bergs.

"The mate beat his breast and clenched his teeth hard,

"'This is all the fault of Petrovolski,' said he. 'We shall perhaps never see our craft again. Our fate will be either freezing or starving to death.'

"He then ordered one of the men to look in the box under the bow, to see how much provision we had with us. The examination revealed just six biscuits—one apiece—while all the fresh water in the boat's keg was frozen. Our shipmates in the other boats were no better off.

"'We are doomed men!' groaned the mate, who, as usual, was disposed to look on the dark side.

"'I trust not!' spoke up young Waud, hopefully. 'When daylight comes, the fog may have cleared and we may see our vessel!'

"He was a brave boy, and I think what he said had a good effect upon his elder shipmates. To see one of his years bear up under hardships with so much fortitude, inspired the rest of us with strength and hope. So we continued to urge our craft through the ice with good will, and we all felt better the harder we worked, for the exercise warmed our blood. All night, with but little interruption, we exerted ourselves at oars and paddles. As the morning light crept round us, we perceived that, as yet, there were no signs of the fog clearing; so we made our way to the shore, and building huts of ice, resolved that there should be our quarters until the mist was dissipated.

"Each man made a meal of his solitary biscuit; then we endeavored to keep up our spirits by relating amusing stories and anecdotes. The biting breeze, keen as a razor, soon put an end to this amusement; we were obliged to exercise to keep ourselves warm. Toward noon the fog cleared, and

we then ascended to the top of a snow-covered promontory to look for our vessel.

"She was nowhere in sight!"

"Ay, ay," said the mate, "it's just as I expected. The current has carried the craft where we'll never see her again. God help us!"

"Our situation was certainly a fearful one. There we were upon an unknown coast, without provision of any kind, exposed to the biting winds of the Antarctic Sea!"

"What shall we do now?" was the question—"stay as fore and trust to the chance of our vessel appearing in sight, or again go to work, forcing our boats through the extensive floe before us, and searching for our craft?"

"After a brief consultation, we concluded to search. This would be better than to remain inactive and in suspense upon a frozen coast."

"Well, after a great deal of trouble, we contrived to push our boats through the floe into water which was tolerably clear of ice. Then we took to our oars, pulling southeast, hoping that, by going thus, we would soon see the *St. Paul*. We were disappointed; and the night again closing around us, found us, gloomy and dispirited, alongside a great berg.

"Fatigued as we were, our anxiety drove sleep from our brains; shivering, and our teeth chattering, we crouched among hollows in the ice to keep ourselves warm, and thus remained until the second day dawned upon us.

"There is no chance of our seeing any other vessel than the *St. Paul*," he said, "for I'm sure no other craft would venture so far south. That Petrovolski has got us into a pretty scrap!"

"Soon after we succeeded in capturing three or four seals. They were cut into portions, which were passed around and eagerly devoured. The idea of such a meal now is not very agreeable, but at that time it was relished better than words can express. When night came we again crawled into our ice-holes, and stopping them up with old pieces of canvas, contrived to sleep without freezing until the third day dawned upon us. Benumbed, scarcely able to move, we emerged from our quarters, and, as before, looked in vain for the *St. Paul*.

"We must take to the boats again," said the mate, "or, before another morning, these ice-holes will be tombs for some of us."

"As we entered the boats, I could not help admiring the conduct of young Waud. While the rest of us were gloomy and downcast, the face of the boy was still lighted with the same expression of hope I had noticed when we first lost sight of our vessel.

"Keep up a good heart," he said, in his clear, ringing voice, even while he shook like a leaf with cold. "I feel as if every thing will come out right in the end."

"You're only mocking us!" said the mate, fiercely. "What's the good of that? Just keep quiet; we may have to make use of you yet!"

"The expression of the speaker's face as he said this made me shudder; it was such a look as I'd seen in the eyes of a half-famished dog while it stood watching a piece of meat hanging from a butcher's stall.

"For many hours we continued to use our oars and paddles; then, much exhausted, we paused.

"Now it was nearly sunset; the red light, streaming from the west, flashed far and near upon the bergs around us, and the clouds seemed to mock us with their golden splendor.

"Some of the men glanced round them, looking for seals, but at present not one was in sight. I saw the eyes of the mate, who stood up gaunt and lean in the stern-sheets, fixed upon poor Waud with the same hungry glare previously noticed.

"It has not come to cannibalism yet, at any rate," I thought; "if it should, this boy will be the first victim."

"At the same moment I heard a light splash behind me, and turning, I beheld a seal just emerging from the water, as it crawled up the sides of a berg near us.

"Waud being more active than his shipmates, sprung upon the ice to secure the prize. It eluded him, however, and finally reached the top of a crystal pinnacle. Still the lad, undiscouraged, endeavored to seize it. He mounted to the frozen summit, and had nearly grasped the animal, when it dove out of sight into the sea.

"There was a cry of disappointment from the men.

"Come into the boat, Waud," said the mate, in a hard, cold voice, like the grating of fragments of ice. "You are not good at catching seals; but you'll come of use before long."

"I knew by the hungry flash in his eye what he meant, and felt an uncomfortable shiver running through me.

The boy was on the point of descending from his position, when, suddenly, something peculiar seemed to arrest his attention. He paused, uttering an exclamation, and, while his eyes glittered like emeralds, he pointed toward the eastern horizon. We all looked in that direction, to behold, high above the ice, a thin layer of blue mist resembling a lake, and which extended far away to the south. In this singular mirror we saw the reflection of a ship, in an inverted position, standing along toward the south and east under reefed topsails.

"It is the *St. Paul!*" screamed the mate—"the *St. Paul!* Thank God!"

"Yes, there was our vessel, sure enough, reflected far up in the air, apparently sailing along bottom upward over the sky.

"Pull—pull, men!" continued the first officer; "there's clear water ahead of us, and we may possibly reach our craft before night."

Of course we all obeyed with a will; but the darkness of night soon closed around us. The mirage had vanished at sundown, and we now had doubts whether we should succeed in finding our craft, after all. The boy Waud kept cheering us up.

"We'll see the vessel," said he "we'll see the vessel in the morning."

"I believe the lad is right, this time," the mate remarked more than once. "I believe that if we keep on towards the south-west we'll sight our craft by daylight."

This inspired the rest of us with hope, and I'm glad to say that we were not disappointed.

At dawn, through a thin vail of mist ahead, we beheld, sure enough, our craft, standing along toward us under reefed topsails.

This was no mirage, but the real *St. Paul*, with ~~Paw-paw~~ peering over the quarter-rail, and hailing us.

"We were soon aboard, describing the sufferings we had endured, and also the mirage, by means of which we had discovered the whereabouts of our vessel."

As the old man concluded his story, the shore was seen ahead, looming up through the darkness. Soon after the boat struck the beach, when Rose made her way back to the inn she had quitted, where she passed a sleepless night.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### CONCLUSION.

EARLY the next morning, Captain Waud was pacing the quarter-deck of his vessel, when he heard the noise of oars not far off.

The fog had not yet lifted, but the boat was so near that he could make out, besides the oarsman, three persons, one of whom he instantly recognized by his tall figure to be Simon Holdfast. The tavern-keeper was soon aboard with two companions—one the stable-boy, the other, Lawyer Briggs.

"These are the witnesses," said Holdfast, "that I spoke of, and I hope now you'll be satisfied."

"Captain Waud is not so unreasonable as not to be, I hope," said Briggs, drawing himself up. "I made out the papers and—"

He paused, on seeing some person pulling the tail of his coat; and turning he saw Nick Brooks.

"Caution is the word, squire!" said that worthy, drawing the lawyer aside. "Now then, what I want you to do is just to go to work and put the craft back into Waud's hands, which you certainly can do—you are so handy at twisting things."

As he spoke he bowed low, and was delighted to see the lawyer return the ceremony.

"Ay, ay?" he shouted, clapping him vigorously on the back. "You're a man to appreciate suavity! It's all right, isn't it—all right between us," and he winked knowingly.

"I don't understand you," said Briggs.

"Ay, ay!" roared Brooks, with another bow. "I say it's all right. You do away with that infarnal mortgage business, and get back Waud's craft for him, and we'll see about the fees."

"You ask too much of me, now," answered Briggs, shrugging his shoulders. "It is astonishing there should be so much ignorance—"

Nick bowed; then, with a yell, he darted forward to inflict summary punishment upon the man of law, when the young captain interposed.

"Ay, ay," said Brooks, as he drew back, "it is lucky, of a certainty, that my caution is so largely enveloped; but for that, I'd have punched this liar unmarcifully!"

Holdfast now advanced, pinching his thin nose.

"I s'pose, neow, Captain Waud—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the young man, gloomily. "I see no help for it. Your claim to the brig and her cargo seems proved."

"Which being the case, if you'll just quit the craft along with your officers and men, why the sooner the better; as I'm in a hurry to dispose of the cargo and get through with the business."

With a feeling of exultation, such as only a nature like his own may understand, Simon watched the sad countenance of the young captain, now half turned from him. True sailor as he was, Waud had become attached to the brig. He had worked her through so many perils, patched her up so often in places where she was crippled, seen her so gallantly weather many a heavy gale; in fact she had so nobly fulfilled her duty, in every respect, that the idea of parting with her now—now, after all the troubles and anxieties of the voyage were past—of surrendering her to such a wretch as Holdfast, seemed cruel indeed, and the thought of it was almost overpowering.

Then his cargo, which he had toiled so hard to procure, so as to win the means of paying his uncle's fearful debt—that, too, must be given up.

Ay, there stood the old man, on the promontory, in a driving storm, still watching and vainly calling for the man who

had promised to bring him his money ; there, too, was Rose, clasping his wrinkled hands, and striving to persuade him to go home out of the rain !

"I can not pay him ; I can not make Rose my bride, after all !" the captain mentally exclaimed.

"He can not marry her !" thought Holdfast, chuckling inwardly. "He will go off again ; they will again be separated."

Suddenly Nick Brooks roused Waud from his gloomy reverie with a good-natured thump upon his shoulder.

"Aisy there, sir ! Wake up !" he said, bowing. "Here's a boat comin' aboard with a female in it."

In a moment all eyes were turned toward the boat, the occupants of which could not be seen very distinctly, on account of the fog.

Soon, however, it was so near that the face of the female was recognized.

"Rose Hope ?" cried Waud, much astonished, and rushing to the gangway to be ready to help her aboard.

Holdfast started, and pinched his nose until it was as red as a beet.

"She has come all this distance to see *him* !" he muttered, crossly. "She wouldn't go three steps to see me ! Well, well, they'll never be married if I can help it. He's now as poor as a beggar, and she's but a very little better off. I wish I could jist blot *him* out of existence, somehow, without committing murder !"

Then he turned to the lawyer.

"Come, squire, we may as well go, I s'pose."

At this moment Rose was helped aboard. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes were very bright.

"I am so glad I have got here at last !" she said.

"Cahm on, lad—caution !" shouted Brooks, motioning to Waud, with uplifted hand. "Don't tell her about it and spile her joy at seeing you ! No—no—of a certainty you must not let her know about your losing the brig and cargo, and—"

"Hush !" interrupted the young captain, sternly ; but Rose had heard enough to excite her fears.

"Ah ! perhaps this is the injury your uncle spoke of ? who

cried. "Is it possible I am too late? I fear I am?" And she covered her face with both little hands.

"If any thing will cheer her up," whispered Nick to Waud, "it's suavity!"

So saying, he took off his sealskin cap and made a low bow, stamping heavily with his boot, at the same time, to attract the young girl's attention.

She now took her hands from her face and drew from her pocket a little tin box.

"I have kept it dry and safe through every thing," she said; "but I'm afraid I've brought it too late!"

She opened the box and put into Waud's hand the sealed envelop, explaining, as she did so, the manner in which it had been sent to Ruth Butler.

The captain, much surprised, opened the note, and found inclosed a receipt bearing date of eight months previous. It was an acknowledgment of the full payment of all the money—fifteen hundred dollars—that John Thomas had borrowed of Simon Holdfast, and was signed by the latter!

For a moment, Waud felt as if he would go mad with joy and indignation combined; joy at such welcome and unexpected tidings, indignation against the rascally Holdfast, who, evidently thinking the receipt would never come to light, had concluded to make use of the mortgage the same as if he had not been paid.

In a few hurried words he explained to Rose the good she had done by bringing him the envelop; then he walked up to Holdfast, and holding the receipt before his eyes, pointed to his own handwriting, and quietly asked him if he recognized it!

Simon started as if struck by a musket-ball; his long nose alternately showed three colors—pale, red and blue—and he trembled all over.

"Caught! You are fairly caught, Simon!" cried Brooks, with a roar of laughter. "Why, bless me, man, I never guessed you were such a *confounded* rascal!"

"Leave the vessel this instant!" continued Waud, his eyes flashing fire into those of the guilty rascal—"this instant, or overboard you go!"

"Hold there!" cried Brooks, now rushing aft, and jumping

upon the steerage hatch, "do nothing rash, sir--caution is the word!"

Down went the hatch, which was only half on, as he spoke, and away went the speaker out of sight, falling into the hold upon some coils of rigging.

He returned to the deck as soon as possible, to see one of the shore-boats shoving off from the brig with the discomfited Holdfast and his companions.

Brooks jumped upon the quarter-rail, and grasping a davit, bowed to them.

"Ay, ay," he shouted—"behold my suavity and learn a lesson from me! Here I am, bowing to three of the most infernal slacks that ever drew breath! Take that, and learn to be more virtuous, suspicious, and cautious in the future!" he added, picking up from the rail a shoe containing slush, and letting it at the occupants of the boat.

This movement made him lose his balance. He fell headlong into the water, from which he was finally rescued, with much difficulty, by Captain Waud and a couple of his men.

"We are all right, now!" cried Will, joyfully. "God bless you, Rose, for bringing me that envelop!"

"Would that I had arrived with it last night!" she answered. "That would have saved you a great deal of anxiety."

Not wishing to cast a single shadow in the way of his present enjoyment, she did not mention the difficulties and hardships that had retarded her journey. She remained conversing with him a few hours; then he accompanied her aboard a steamer that was to start for Colhasset. Soon they took leave of each other, Waud gayly remarking that he would come to the village at an early day to claim his bride.

He kept his word. His cargo was disposed of to good advantage in the course of a week. He paid his crew, and also the steamer-owner of whom his uncle had borrowed funds to provision the vessel; then he took passage for the village, which he reached in good time.

Three thousand dollars in gold he gave to old Mr. Hope, one morning, while he stood watching, in his usual way, from the promontory.

The old man clutched the pieces, and opened his eyes very

wide. Then he clapped a hand to his forehead, as if to collect his scattered thoughts.

"Let me see," he muttered. "What is this money for?"

"It is the debt my uncle contracted of you."

"But your uncle, I think I heard somebody say, was dead!"

"You are right; he died eight months ago, and left me to pay you what he owed you."

Still Mr. Hope looked a little puzzled. There was the money, however; the bright yellow pieces gleaming in his hand. He was no longer a beggar, at any rate.

He left the promontory, on this day, before the bell struck twelve!

On the next morning Rose watched him anxiously, to see if he would pay his usual visit to the sea-side. He did so; but he had not watched long when suddenly a faint recollection of having received his money seemed to dawn upon his mind.

He laughed joyfully, and rubbing his hands, quitted the promontory.

"Was it a dream?" he inquired, as he came staggering into the room where Rose was seated talking to her lover. "Was it a dream, or did I really get some money yesterday?"

Waud assured him that it was no dream.

"I am so very glad," he said. "Bring me my money."

Rose brought it to him; he poured the gold on the table, and counted it over again and again, now and then clutching a coin when it rolled, as if he feared it would vanish from his sight.

"It is all there," he said at length. "Yes, it is all there, and I'm a beggar no longer!"

The young people endeavored to draw him into rational conversation; but he seemed buried in deep thought, and paid no heed to them.

"It will be the happiest moment of my life," Waud said to Rose, in a low voice, "when I see him fully restored to his reason. Then, and not till then, shall I feel the full satisfaction of having paid my uncle's debt."

"Isn't it singular," remarked Ruth, who was now seated near him, "that your uncle should have paid Mr. West what he owed him, sooner than send the money to Mr. Hope?"

Then there's another thing that puzzles me, which is, how he knew that Holdfast would try to force his mortgage claim, after being paid!"

"That is easily explained," answered Waud. "In his letter to you he wrote that Holdfast told him I had resolved to pay Mr. Hope's debt. This knowledge probably made him courage to give Simon *his* fifteen hundred dollars, and thus leave brig and cargo all clear of the mortgage, so that I might be free to pay the debt. In order to make sure of this, he sent you the receipt signed by Holdfast. He always had a worse opinion of this man than I had, and this, evidently, was why he not only sent the receipt, but charged you to say nothing to any person about having received the envelop. He feared that if Simon heard of it, he might contrive somehow to get it into his hands. As to his not telling you what the envelop contained, which may also puzzle you," added Waud, smiling, "I am afraid my uncle had a poor opinion of woman's ability to keep a secret. He was afraid you might mention it to some person, and that it would thus reach the ears of the prying Holdfast."

Ruth shook her head and declared that Mr. Thomas had formed a wrong opinion of *her*; she knew a great many things that she might tell if she chose, but she wouldn't, for fear of getting those that told her into trouble, etc.

On the next day Mr. Hope left the house as if to pay his usual visit to the promontory; but when almost there, he suddenly stopped, seemed to recollect himself, and turning, retraced his way.

Rose consulted the doctor, who said that the symptoms were favorable, and advised that the old man should not be interfered with, but should be allowed to have his own way in every thing.

His directions were implicitly followed, and in the course of a few weeks Waud learned, with great joy, that Mr. Hope was rapidly recovering. A month later he was able to converse rationally upon any subject, and the doctor informed Rose that he was now fully as sane as before his attack.

His mind now being free from every care, the young captain requested Rose to get ready to marry him as soon as possible. She did so; and on the first day of January, 1816, she

and Will Waud were made man and wife by the village minister, who came to Ruth Butler's through a heavy snow-storm, expressly to perform this pleasing ceremony. Among the guests, Nick Brooks made himself especially conspicuous by his suavity and towering seal-skin cap. The latter he would keep putting on his head just for the purpose of showing how gracefully he could take it off when he bowed. Before the party broke up he performed at least a hundred and fifty bows, during which he trod on the toes of four spinsters, and damaged six young ladies' head-dresses. Holdfast, of course, was not present; in fact he was no longer living in the village. He had heard vague rumors of tar and feathers in connection with himself, and had removed, a week previous, to New Bedford, never to show his face again in the neighborhood of Chassett.

As Waud was leaving the room, Brooks whispered to him these words:

" You've cut out that rascally Simon in spite of all his property. Rose is a sensible gal, and you must be careful with her. The way to keep the affections of t'other sex is to be cautious."

He turned round to bow to the ladies, when his seal-skin cap dropped from his head, and in attempting to regain it, he bumped his nose against the wall.

At night, while the guests were leaving, he stood bowing them out and advising them to be cautious and not take cold, when a gust of wind blew his cap out of doors.

With a wild yell away he went after the treasure, which he was obliged to pursue for a quarter of a mile before he succeeded in securing it. When he returned to the house, he found his sister anxiously waiting for him.

" My carefulness is remarkable!" he exclaimed, " else I'd certainly never have got this cap again, which I hope will last me many a v'yage yet, unless—I get married. If I do get spliced I shall be cautious who I take into wedlock."

A few months after, he married a fierce-tempered vixen of fifty who gave him no peace. She thrashed him with broom and tongs whenever it suited her humor. She did not last long; she died seven months after wedlock.

" Caution is the word," said Nick to the grave-digger

"pile on the 'arth so that there'll be no possible way of her getting out again!"

"Hush, Nick!" said Waud, who stood near him. "You should not have said that."

Brooks took off his seal-skin cap, bowed, and winked knowingly.

A few days after, he went to sea.

"The poor fellow evidently feels very sorry about the loss of his wife," said Rose to her husband. She was not present at the funeral.

Waud smiled.

"Some married couples are uncogenial," he remarked. "All are not as happy as you and I. Sweet Rose," he added, putting both her hands in one of his, "fortune has indeed favored me. I have paid my uncle's debt—that debt which haunted and harrassed me through all the troubles of my difficult voyage! There were times when I thought I should not succeed, but at such times I always worked the hardest; and now behold my reward! I have obtained one of the best of wives—I have won the beauty of the village!"

Rose laid her warm cheek on his shoulder, and looking up archly into his face, she said :

"WHERE THERE'S A WILL (WILL) THERE'S A WAY."



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